

Odds and Ends

1 - Intro

This will be a collection of stories that are not big enough to stand on their own. The reason for that may be one or more of the following.

- I liked the premise, but don't care about writing the full story. There could be several reasons for this, such as the full story would require writing 4 or more years and I don't have the motivation. Or maybe I liked the premise, but I don't think the story (as it is conceived in my head) is worth that much effort. Or ... I'm sure you get the point that I don't care about the story for some reason any more.

- I've decided the story just won't work. My favorite author, Jeconais, has said that sometimes it takes him 50K-words to find out that a story just doesn't work. I'd like to hope I can figure that out sooner than 50K-words, but his point is a valid one. I have tossed outlines because as I plan the story, I find that if I'm anywhere near logical, I have to abandon the story because I've "painted myself into a corner" and I can't see a way to fix it. Or almost worse, things have gotten so wild and crazy, that the story can't figure where it wants to go. Or it wants to go in a direction I'm not comfortable with.

- Maybe time has become an issue. The premise is reasonable, I want to write the story, but I do this in my free time and this idea is at the bottom of the "favorite ideas" list and I don't see that ever changing.

- The story is too short to stand on it's on, but amusing enough to release.

- This is way for me to "clean my hard drive" so my potential story list stays more manageable.

There may be other reasons I'll abandon a story, but the above are the most obvious.

OTOH, if I've invested enough time into the story, there's also no reason not to share it and let it find a good home. :-)

So, if you're an author and see something in this story line that you like and want to adopt, feel free to drop me a note (either in a review or PM), telling me what you want to adopt an idea.

I only have a few simple conditions on taking one of my "children":

- You have to credit me (kb0) with the idea. You can change the idea, and that might be required to make the story work, but please point to where the inspiring idea came from.

- You have to plan to complete the story. If you don't think you'll have time to complete it, either don't take the idea, or at least let me know when you abandon it so I can reoffer the idea up for adoption to others.

In return, I'll mark the story idea with your ID so people can find a fuller version of the idea.

Oh, and please don't bother to complain about typos, write-o's, thinko's, etc as everything in this story/series is NOT beta'd. It's not worth the effort and I don't want to torture someone to work on a story that's not really going anywhere. It's also quite possible these little stories are not worth the electrons used to represent them -- read at your own risk.

Just in case someone is not clear, the HP universe is owned by someone commonly known as JKR and probably several corporations. I am none of those. I write for fun and without making any profit on this. If anything is recognizable as JKR's, it's hers; I'll take the plot and leftovers. If you think I do own the HP world, please turn off your computer and leave it off while you go get professional help. :)

So, I've explained and disclaimed, now read if you dare...

2 - Got Milk?

Bruce parked his milk truck between number six and number four. The parking lights on his panel truck made an eerie glow in the early morning fog. Looking to the east, he saw the faint glow that indicated dawn was not far away. That meant he was right on time to finish his shift.

Checking the order sheet, he saw that number six wanted a pint of cream, in addition to their normal two quarts of milk. Number four wanted nothing extra, so it was the usual three quarts for them. Grabbing what he needed, he put the bottles in his wire basket and walked out of his quietly running truck to deliver them.

He dropped off number six's first, where he also picked up a few empty bottles. But when he arrived at number four's porch, he found a surprise. Without thinking he swapped the full bottles for the empties, but his attention was riveted to a wicker basket containing a small face wrapped in a blue blanket. Peeling back the blanket revealed the rest of a sleeping baby with a blood encrusted scar on its little forehead.

Bruce's anger flared. Who would leave an injured baby on a doorstep on a very cool November night, because that was clearly what had happened. Or else, he suddenly thought, did the baby belong to these people and they were trying to give the baby to him, or anyone else who came along early in the morning? Looking again, he noticed an envelop in the basket. It was too dark to read it here, so he picked up the basket of baby and his basket of bottles, and returned to his truck. The bottles were stashed with barely a thought.

The baby basket was put beside his chair in the draft of the warm air from the floor heater. He again picked up the envelope with no name. With a shrug, he opened it and began to read.

Dear Petunia,

OK, that meant this family was not getting rid of the baby, and that it had been dropped off here. The name Petunia rang a bell

somewhere too, and it was not because it was on his order sheet. All that was there was "V. Dursley".

I'm terribly sorry to inform you that your sister Lily and her husband James have been murdered. Fortunately, little Harry survived and I bring him to you because you are the last of the Evans line and there are no Potters.

Petunia Evans, Lily Evans. Why did that ring a bell? Bruce kept reading.

I ask that you accept him into your home. If you will verbally say, "I accept Harry Potter into my home as part of my family," then that will complete his protection for as long as he can call your house his home. That will keep him, and by extension your family too, safe.

Please raise him as your own and tell him of his heritage when he gets older. We will contact you when he turns 11 to make arrangements to send him to school.

Albus P.W.B. Dumbledore

That's some name, Bruce thought. He also considered the situation he was presently in, or rather the situation the baby was in. It was quite cool outside, in fact, he was glad for the heater in his truck on at the moment. He also had met the Dursleys a few times trying to collect payment when they had not mailed theirs in. They had not been pleasant people, although maybe that was just because he had been making a collection. Still, they did not look like pleasant people and they had been very rude to him. Lastly, the names Petunia, Lily, Evans, and Potter seemed familiar for some reason. Then it hit him.

A few years ago, his wife had dragged him to a family reunion on her side. There, they had met a second cousin or something named Lily Evans who was engaged to a bloke named Potter. That Lily had a sister named Petunia. He wondered what the odds were they were all the same people. In thinking back, he would have to admit that he had not paid much attention to everyone, but there was some similarities between those women and the woman who lived at the Dursley house, at least from what little he could remember.

Figuring it could not hurt, Bruce wedged the wicker basket in among the crates and then slowly started driving back to the plant. He'd drop the truck off and take the baby home. Sarah would remember if all the names fit and if this Petunia Evans became a Dursley. If not, he could take the baby back before the Dursleys woke up. If they did all match, then he and Sarah were family too and he would bet that he could convince her to keep the abandoned baby.

They had been trying to have a baby for several years and had not been able to, so he all but knew that Sarah would say yes. Adopting the baby, Harry he remembered, should be pretty easy. Their home would be far better than an orphanage, and probably better than the Dursleys as well. They would be sure little Harry did not lose his heritage, whatever that was. When he got older, Bruce would explain what happened and let Harry decide what name he wanted: Potter or Creevey.

(note to self: actually colin should have just been born, so perhaps the problem is they can't have any more and wanted 1 more, so she'll say yes to get another)

--- end of premise ---

Notes:

Sarah is a distant Muggle relative (2nd or 3rd cousin and about 10 yrs older than Lily/Petunia), and because she's a Muggle and not in the immediate family of Lily, the wizarding world not keep track of her.

Will Sarah uttering the "magic phrase" constitute acceptance? (yes)

Assuming Dumbledore has his little silver instruments already attuned to Harry, how will they react? (showing normal?) Or are they attuned to Privet Dr? (where they'd show dead) (todo: work out the magical theory on the instruments and what/who AD would have attuned them to)

What happens when gets on the scene and discovers no HP? When would she show up? (could be a couple of years) How long would it

take her to find out? How would the Dursleys react when the old woman is poking her nose in their business, and therefore how would they react to AD when he shows up inquiring about Harry, whom they know nothing of?

Is it possible for Dumbledore to track Harry in any other way to find him? (are there tracking charms on him?) Can an owl be tracked or a tracking charm put on a letter? It would be far more fun if AD could not track Harry down before the Hogwarts letter came out.

Fun thought: It's Harry's presence that allows Sarah to get pregnant, causing Colin to be conceived. (alas, the timing doesn't quite work out, as Colin would need to be born already). More realistic: they have Colin, but something happened and they think they'll never have another child, along comes Harry and his strong magic allows little brother Dennis to be conceived in a year or so.

(/IF/ AD can find HP in 1981) What if the Creeveys adopt him before Dumbledore finds him, would Dumbledore try to take Harry away, especially when he can see strong blood wards in existence? What would the Creeveys do if AD tried? Would AD explain Harry's magical heritage or just say that he'll be back when Harry is 11? Would Hagrid still be sent after Harry in the summer of 1991?

What if AD quickly finds out (due to his instruments) that Harry is not with the Dursleys? (the opposite of the above paragraph) What would he do and what would the Creeveys do? (they would not yet be the legal guardians, unless he waits too long)

How would Harry be changed by growing up in a loving family:? With 2 little brothers (Colin and Dennis) who won't be fan-boys? Does this change where he gets sorted? Does this personality change affect who his close friends are (almost certainly if he gets sorted into a different house, which might happen because he would grow up knowing what love and acceptance is)

(A/N: This story is abandoned because I just don't feel like writing the typical "Harry raised by another family" story.)

3 - A Smarter Ginny

Premise: What if Ginny was a little smarter and more assertive at the end of book6 and the beginning of book7?

(A/N: A random idea that hit me. All bold text is quoted from either book6 or book7 and is used only for setup of the parts I wanted to write.)

(At Dumbledore's funeral...)

Harry looked at Ginny, Ron and Hermione: Ron's face was screwed up as though the sunlight was blinding him. Hermione's face was glazed with tears, but Ginny was no longer crying. She met Harry's gaze with the same hard, blazing look that he had seen when she had hugged him after winning the Quidditch Cup in his absence, and he knew that at that moment they understood each other perfectly, and that when he told her what he was going to do now, she would not say "Be careful", or "Don't do it", but accept his decision, because she would not have expected anything less of him. And so he steeled himself to say what he had known he must say ever since Dumbledore had died.

"Ginny, listen..." he said very quietly, as the buzz of conversation grew louder around them and people began to get to their feet. "I can't be involved with you any more. We've got to stop seeing each other. We can't be together."

She said, with an oddly twisted smile, "It's for some stupid, noble reason, isn't it?"

"It's been like... like something out of someone else's life, these last few weeks with you," said Harry. "But I can't... we can't... I've got things to do alone now."

She did not cry, she simply looked at him.

"Voldemort uses people his enemies are close to. He's already used you as bait once, and that was just because you're my best friend's

sister. Think how much danger you'll be in if we keep this up. He'll know, he'll find out. He'll try and get to me through you."

"What if I don't care?" said Ginny fiercely.

"I care," said Harry. "How do you think I'd feel if this was your funeral... and it was my fault..."

She looked away from him, over the lake.

"I never really gave up on you," she said. "Not really. I always hoped... Hermione told me to get on with life, maybe go out with some other people, relax a bit around you, because I never used to be able to talk if you were in the room, remember? And she thought you might take a bit more notice if I was a bit more -- myself"

"Smart girl, that Hermione," said Harry, trying to smile. "I just wish I'd asked you sooner. We could've had ages... months... years maybe..."

"But you've been too busy saving the wizarding world," said Ginny, half-laughing. "Well... I can't say I'm surprised. I knew this would happen in the end. I knew you wouldn't be happy unless you were hunting Voldemort. Maybe that's why I like you so much."

"I'm really sorry," he told her and started to turn away, but she reached up and grabbed his shoulder to stop him.

"Is this temporary or permanent?" she asked, oddly calm.

"Why? What difference does it make until I'm done?" He wondered why she was prolonging this.

"I want to know if you're really doing this just to protect me, or if you really never meant it?" When he started to object, Ginny hastily added, "I heard what you said a minute ago, but I want to make sure."

"Just until this is over. You can wait that long, right?" he asked hopefully.

"If it's just temporary," she said, ignoring his question, "then why bother? I... My whole family is on his list of people to kill. They'll come after us as soon as there are no other more important things to do, or if they happen to find us somewhere."

Harry looked at her carefully, weighing what she said. "That may be true, but if you're not my girlfriend, that will move you lower on the list."

Ginny gave a short laugh. "Harry, don't be naïve. I'm sure Snape and Malfoy have already told Riddle that I'm your girlfriend."

He shook his head. "Then they can tell him that we broke up."

"That's my point, Harry. They won't know we've broken up. They've both already left," she said logically.

"There are others around who will tell," he told her, still sure he was taking the right action.

"Harry, are you returning to Hogwarts next year?" she suddenly asked.

"No," he answered, not sure where she was going with that.

"Because you have better things to do, right?" she prompted. It hurt a little that he had not told her what he was doing, but she could deal with that most of the time.

"Right."

"I'm not coming back next year either, so there will be no one to tell Riddle we aren't together," she announced a little fiercely, as if daring him to contradict her.

"What?" he was very surprised. "You have to return. You have so much more to learn..."

"And you haven't?" she interrupted him.

"Not as much, but that's beside the point. I have things that Dumbledore told me to do, you don't," he told her and stepped a few inches closer, as if trying to make her see his point.

"Harry, Hogwarts will become a school run by Death Eaters. I'm a Pureblood girl who's considered a traitor, which means I'll rank right down there with the Muggle-born girls as far as worth," she argued, her voice going a little lower. "I'll be a prime candidate for a mistress. All it will take is one time of catching me unaware and it's all over. They'll do whatever they feel like and then ship me off to Riddle. It will be far safer for me to stay at home and be home schooled."

He paled as he considered what she said. Still, he did not want to give up. "Your mother will never let you."

Ginny wanted to scream he was being so stubborn, but she kept to her argument. "I'll handle her. It will be much easier to convince her than you seem to think." Now Ginny stepped forward a half-step to match him, putting them almost nose to nose, although they were staring into each other's eyes. "It doesn't matter what you say, Harry. I'm not letting you go. Yes, we could have had months or years more together if you had approached me sooner. I'm telling you that we will have those months or years the war will last. I'm not giving up on you just because you're trying to be all noble so you don't have to feel guilty that it's all your fault. If something were to happen to me, it would never be your fault."

"I didn't say it would be my fault, but like I said, it would kill me if I had to go to your funeral and if it was my fault," he said just as fiercely and quietly as she had been arguing.

"And what do you think your leaving will do to me, Harry? Did you think about that? I told you that I understood you had to go hunt Voldemort. I know you'll have to leave to go on missions from time to time. But you won't be gone all the time and I want us to have each other during those times when you're not gone. I may even be able to help you more than you think, if you'll only give me the chance."

"But Ginny..."

"Damn it, Harry!" she hissed. "What is it going to take for you to understand that I have needs too? Do I mean nothing to you?"

Harry was driven a half-step backwards by her intensity. "Of course not," he finally answered her.

She did not want to do this, but maybe it was the only way. "If you insist, I'll pretend temporarily that we've broken up, but by the end of the summer, we will be back together again, even if I have to run away from home after you. Do you now understand how I feel about you?"

He slowly nodded. "You really are serious." He now understood that hard and blazing look of hers was not what he had originally thought. It really meant that she had determined to get what she wanted.

"You're damn straight I am. What kind of girlfriend would I be if I gave up so easily? Now, make a decision," she whispered. "Do we continue on normally or are you going to insist on a temporary split for show?"

Harry knew what he wanted, but he did not dare. Even her compromise was more than he felt should happen, but he could tell the fiery redhead in front of him was changing his plans whether he liked it or not. He just hoped this worked out all right. "I'm sorry," he almost croaked, his voice so low. "We can't continue on like normal."

That determined look returned to her eyes. "I'm sorry too, Harry. I'll see you after your birthday," she said so softly he barely heard her.

Ginny glanced around and saw that her brother and Hermione were still nearby, but fortunately, still only paying attention to each other. Reaching down for all the skills her twin brothers had ever taught her, she thought about what he had originally tried to do and let her emotions come rushing to the surface. Scrunching up her face in anger and taking a step back, she screamed, "Potter! You bastard! Don't you ever come near me again!" Actually meaning a little of it because of what he had tried to do, she let her arm come swinging around and a loud slap was heard as her hand hit his face. With tears starting to run down her face, she turned and stomped off.

She saw everyone stare at her momentarily as she made her way back up to the castle and her dorm room. She had not wanted to do that. It hurt her in several different ways to have done that, including that she knew she had hurt him, but it was what he wanted. She hoped it accomplished his goal.

Behind her, Harry squatted down and picked up his glasses off the ground and put them back on. His face hurt -- a lot. As he stood back up, he came face to face with another reality of trying to push Ginny away.

Ron was looking at him murderously and Hermione was giving him pitying looks. He saw blurry movement out of the corner of his eye and in looking, he saw the twins walking towards him. Behind them, Bill and Fleur stood, each of them giving him dirty looks. He did not know where her parents and Charlie were, but he hoped he could escape them for now.

"What did you do to her?" Ron asked as he grabbed the front of Harry's robes. "You get one chance to explain." The twins walked up at that time.

Fortunately for Harry, Minister Scrimgeour picked that moment to show. While Harry did not want to talk to the Minister, the old Auror's timing was helpful and he took it. "I'll explain in private," he hurriedly said before turning to the newest arrival. "Minister."

"Mr Potter," I'd like a word with you, Scrimgeour said.

"Of course, Minister." Ron let go and Harry smoothed his robes as he walked off with the Minister and away from many Weasley glares. He would explain that what Ginny did was for show to protect her. He hoped they bought it.

With a jerk behind the navel as though an invisible hook and line had dragged him forward, Harry was pulled into nothingness, spinning uncontrollably, his finger glued to the Portkey as he and Hagrid

hurtled away from Mr. Tonks. Second later, Harry's feet slammed onto hard ground and he fell onto his hands and knees in the yard of the Burrow. He heard screams. Throwing aside the no longer glowing hairbrush, Harry stood up, swaying slightly, and saw Mrs. Weasley and Ginny running down the steps by the back door as Hagrid, who had also collapsed on landing, clambered laboriously to his feet.

"Harry? You are the real Harry? What happened? Where are the others?" cried Mrs. Weasley.

"What d'you mean? Isn't anyone else back?" Harry panted.

The answer was clearly etched in Mrs. Weasley's pale face.

"The Death Eaters were waiting for us," Harry told her, "We were surrounded the moment we took off -- they knew it was tonight -- I don't know what happened to anyone else, four of them chased us, it was all we could do to get away, and then Voldemort caught up with us -- "

He could hear the self-justifying note in his voice, the plea for her to understand why he did not know what had happened to her sons, but --

"Thank goodness you're all right," she said, pulling him into a hug he did not feel he deserved.

"Haven't go' any brandy, have yeh, Molly?" asked Hagrid a little shakily, "Fer medicinal purposes?"

She could have summoned it by magic, but as she hurried back toward the crooked house, Harry knew that she wanted to hide her face.

He turned to Ginny and she threw herself on Harry, practically squeezing the life out of him as she hugged him. "I've missed you so much," she told him fervently. Ginny then pulled back a little and kissed him soundly.

"Wow," Harry said shakily, totally unprepared for that reception. He had expected a far colder one.

"I told you I'm not letting you go, Harry." She looked at him intently until he nodded, then she relaxed and started to tell him about the others coming back. Her mother saw them coming into the house walking arm in arm and gave them a nervous smile as she went to help Hagrid.

A few days later, they were all sitting down and having dinner and discussing current events.

"And they still haven't called a hearing about all the underage magic I used escaping the Death Eaters?" Harry called across the table to Mr. Weasley, who shook his head.

"Because they know I had no choice or because they don't want me to tell the world Voldemort attacked me?"

"The latter, I think. Scrimgeour doesn't want to admit that You-Know-Who is as powerful as he is, nor that Azkaban's seen a mass breakout."

"Yeah, why tell the public the truth?" said Harry, clenching his knife so tightly that the faint scars on the back of his right hand stood out, white against his skin: I must not tell lies.

"Isn't anyone at the Ministry prepared to stand up to him?" asked Ron angrily.

"Of course, Ron, but people are terrified," Mr. Weasley replied, "terrified that they will be next to disappear, their children the next to be attacked! There are nasty rumors going around; I for one don't believe the Muggle Studies professor at Hogwarts resigned. She hasn't been seen for weeks now. Meanwhile Scrimgeour remains shut up in his office all day; I just hope he's working on a plan."

There was a pause in which Mrs. Weasley magicked the empty plates onto the work surface and served apple tart.

"Mum? Dad?" Ginny looked at her parents. "I've grabbed Ron's books from this last year. I just need someone to pick up a Potions Kit for sixth years and probably some parchment and quills, then I'll be ready for home schooling this year."

"No!" Mrs Weasley all but shouted. "You will not abandon your schooling, young lady."

"I'm not, Mum. I'll just be doing it from home..."

"I don't think so," her mother persisted and looked at her husband.

"Why, Ginny?" her father quietly asked.

"You've just answered the why, Dad. Professors are disappearing, Dumbledore is no longer there, Hogwarts is not safe any more," Ginny replied.

"And why do you think you can do this at home?" he asked tiredly.

"Arthur!" his wife screeched, hands on hips. Everyone else at the table remained perfectly quiet and still, hoping to avoid being brought into this.

"Because I've always had very good grades," she answered, ignoring her mother's outburst. "Independent study is not that hard. I do it for half of my classes at school most of the time anyway. And if I get stuck on something, I'll have you and Mum, as well as all my brothers who have already gone through this, plus whoever else happens to be around from time to time."

"Those bad stories are just rumors," her mother said forcefully, as if trying to convince herself.

"And when Death Eaters are running the school, how will you feel when they use me to get to you?" Her mother gasped as she sucked in her breath. "Our family is known to be blood traitors and working

for Dumbledore's group." Ginny looked between her parents. Her father was looking resigned and she mentally rejoiced. Her mother was still looking defiant, however.

"You still belong in school," her mother finally said with a large nod, as if that settled it.

Ginny still had two more ideas though. "So, you're fine with, as one Slytherin told me last year and I quote, You just wait until next year little Weasley, you'll be big enough to bend over a desk."

"Ginevra! Such language!" her mother huffed. Her brothers looked very upset. Only Harry and her father did not.

Ginny suspected her father had expected something like this to come up, and Harry had heard her say this before.

"Mum," said in a bored and slightly disappointed tone, "I was quoting the boy. Please ignore his crudeness and look at what he threatened me with. I don't want to have to worry about the possibility of being caught unaware at school and then taken to some unused classroom before I'm sent off to Voldemort for torture and to be used to make you do things," she argued.

"But, but," her mother stammered slowly.

"Molly, she has a point," her father said wearily. "Ron has already told us he's not going back so Ginny would be there alone." His wife looked upset; Ron's refusal to return was still a sore spot for the mother. "We haven't even heard if Hogwarts is reopening, and if it does, she might be right in that Death Eaters are running it. If she's that uncomfortable with going back, then she doesn't have to," he said with a finality he rarely used. "Besides," his weariness returned, "we will probably need the money saved from their tuition. I don't know how long I'll be able to keep my job."

"Oh, Arthur." She came around the table and gave her husband a hug.

She also did not say anything more about Ginny's school choice, so Ginny looked at Harry and smiled ever so slightly. Harry just shook his head in chagrin. He had to say that Ginny was incredible.

After Bill and Fleur were officially married and the party started, Ginny went over to a disguised Harry. She reached out and pulled him up and out onto the dance floor. He dragged his feet and was reluctant, but he went.

Ginny snuggled up close to him and enjoyed him holding her during the slow dance. "Are you convinced now?" she asked.

Harry chuckled. "Yes, you're right. Your way is better."

She purred and moved her head around on his shoulder a little, as if trying to find the place that was just right. "I know it will be tough at times. We'll be in hiding and it may be hard to get to us, but I'll always be there and waiting for you with open arms."

"And a warm kiss?" he teased.

Ginny giggled softly. "Yes, a very warm and very willing kiss -- many kisses, in fact. I don't want you to forget why you're fighting."

"No chance of that," he told her as they swayed gently to the beat of the music.

She lifted her head and stared into his green eyes. A Mona Lisa smile came to her for a moment before she said, "I love you."

He looked a little nervous, but he grinned at her. "I lo..."

A large silvery and gleaming animal suddenly appeared in the midst of the party. Out of its mouth came the voice of Kingsley Shacklebolt. "The Ministry has fallen. Scrimgeour is dead. They are coming."

Harry looked at Ginny, who returned his look of horror. The war was coming to them and their time of testing was beginning.

(the end)

(A/N: This is the direction I wish the real books had gone, but alas, :) I was disappointed. This story is abandoned because I just did not feel like continuing it. I don't think it shows that much promise considering I don't like book7 that much and isn't worth my time to figure out the changes this would make to be basic plot of book7. I like the idea of making Ginny more of a real character in book7, but I don't want to write this.

Notes:

The obvious question to answer is would Harry still willingly sacrifice himself to remove the Horcrux in him? The story could be written such that yes he would, as he would be sacrificing himself to save Ginny. Or it could be written that they find another way to remove the Horcrux so that Harry's sacrifice isn't needed because he was really looking forward to a life with Ginny, so dying really wasn't an option. I personally prefer this last option.

I'd probably also put The Burrow under Fidelius since #12 GP is compromised, with Bill doing the charm and making Ginny the Secret Keeper, since she would be the most protected person and the one they would not want going out. That would create a bit of the "stir-craziness" that Sirius experienced in being cooped up, but she could go outside at least a little, as the charm would probably hide the back garden/yard as well as the structure of the house.)

The Patil Sisters

Harry was carefully watching, waiting to make his move. He really didn't want to do this, but he felt it was the right thing to do, regardless of his feelings. If he went by his feelings, he would be back in his dorm room curled into a ball on his bed. It had only been a couple of days since he had seen Cedric Diggory killed and Voldemort seemingly raised from the dead. But despite his feelings, he must do this now, everyone was leaving Hogwarts tomorrow.

Finally, he saw Parvati Patil get up from the table and start walking towards the doors to leave the Great Hall. Padma rose at approximately the same time. With a hasty "I'll find you later" given to his friends, Harry also got up and hurried after the twins. It wasn't hard to imagine that Ron and Hermione were wondering what was going on, but at the moment, all he hoped was that they didn't follow him. As he reached the doors, a quick glance back showed that they were still seated.

Turning and hurrying down the corridor, Harry saw the sisters and quickly walked after them. When no one else was nearby, he called out. "Parvati! Padma!"

They turned as one and the instant they saw who it was, each of them gave him a cold look, one he knew he deserved.

"Can I please talk to you for a few minutes? I need to tell you a few things and after that, well, if you want to yell at me or slap me, then I won't blame you and will take it." He gave them his best pleading look and hoped they would hear him out.

They looked at each other and seemed to have a silent conversation. Finally, they turned back to him and Padma said, "In here Potter." She led them to an old classroom that was nearby. Parvati came after him and closed the door after they were in.

The two Patil sisters stared at him, waiting. Harry looked at them. Besides one being in Gryffindor robes and the other being in Ravenclaw robes, the differences between them were very small. Parvati's hair had a slight curl to it; Padma's was completely straight.

Harry also thought Parvati's eyebrows were slightly thinner. Otherwise, they were identical at first glance. As they continued to stare at him, over a few seconds, he noticed that Parvati became more agitated while Padma continued to stand completely still.

"I, uh, I have a few things to tell you and then if you want to go off on me, I'll understand and I won't fight back."

They just blinked, still waiting.

"Listen, I just wanted to apologize for my behavior earlier in the year, as well as give you an explanation. Padma, I'm sorry I got you involved with Ron at the Yule Ball. He was having problems with something else and should have paid more attention to you, but I'm sorry I asked Parvati to ask you to go with him."

Padma tilted her head slightly and examined him minutely. Harry had a hard time not looking away.

"While I appreciate this, why are you here apologizing and Ron isn't?"

Harry shuffled his feet. "Because he, uh, ... he won't think to come do this," he finished lamely.

Padma nodded once. "I heard about his explosion at Hermione after the Ball. I assume that's what caused his inattention?"

"I believe so, although Ron never discusses his feelings." Harry snorted. "I didn't know he had any feelings for Hermione until then. It took me completely by surprise."

Padma smiled for the first time. "The fact that Weasley has any feelings beyond those for food and Quidditch surprises most of us. I forgive you for your part, Harry. You couldn't have known the prat was going to do that. However, I will request you never mention this to him or prompt him in any way. While I would like an apology from him, if it happens, I want it to happen because he thinks of it himself."

Harry nodded, happy she had accepted his apology. "Of course. Personally, I'd be surprised if he ever did it, but I understand you wanting it to be genuine."

He turned a little to face Parvati. This one was going to be a lot harder. He forced himself to stand up straighter. "Parvati, I would like to apologize to you for ruining your evening at the Yule Ball. Not that it excuses me, but I was having trouble dealing with being in the Triwizard Tournament. Now that it's known that I really didn't put my name in the Goblet of Fire, that may help my conscious, but it still doesn't excuse my ignoring you during much of the Yule Ball and being a bad date. Please accept my deepest apologies for my inattention and general prattishness. If I knew of a way to make it up to you, I would."

Parvati's gaze was still cool. He found her scrutiny harder to endure than Padma's. Then again, his guilt had been minimal with Padma, while he was directly responsible for Parvati's woes. Tears welled in the girl's eyes. Harry wanted to look away, but forced himself not to.

"I was so happy to be asked by you and you took that away from me," she said more than a little fiercely.

Harry saw movement from the corner of his eye, but he stood stock still as her hand swung around and slapped his face. As he slowly turned back to her, he saw a look of surprise on Padma's face. Apparently she was as surprised at the depth of Parvati's hurt as he was. He continued to silently wait.

She pulled a corner of her robes up and dabbed at her eyes. "I'm sorry; I didn't mean to hurt you," she told him. "I've been holding that in for so long." She sighed and stole a glance at her sister before turning back to him. "I'll forgive you if you do one thing for me."

Hoping the price wouldn't be too high, Harry said, "Name it." He was glad his voice hadn't squeaked or otherwise betrayed his fear of what she might ask.

"Kiss me. Kiss me like you would have at the end of the date. Kiss me like you really mean it," she demanded.

Harry blinked for a moment, stunned at her demand. It wasn't overly hard, in and of itself, but he had never really kissed a girl before. He wasn't sure he could kiss her "like he really meant it." That was gave him some cause for panic.

A snigger caught his attention and made him looked at Padma. She had a full grin on her face. "The great Harry Potter panicked by the thought of having to kiss a girl." She shook her head before she looked at her sister. "Parv, you could have asked for so much more, and you ask for a kiss?"

"While the date didn't go well, he owes me a good ending," Parvati defended her decision.

Padma shrugged, although mirth was still present.

Harry thought the girl looked very pretty that way. He had always thought both twins were cute, but now Padma seemed to change in front of his eyes into pretty. That realization surprised him.

"Well, Harry?"

Parvati's question pulled Harry back into reality. He looked at her and nodded. "As you wish. Now?" He wasn't sure about kissing her in front of her sister, but if that was what she wanted, he would do it.

She nodded and relaxed her stance slightly, arms hanging at her sides.

Not totally sure what to do, Harry screwed up his courage and walked up to her, standing toe to toe with his fellow Gryffindor. As he started to lean forward, Parvati took a step back and exclaimed, "What are you doing? You're supposed to kiss me like you really mean it, not like you'd kiss Granger."

He couldn't understand. "What do you mean?"

Parvati looked disappointed in him, but Padma saved him. "Parv, I don't think he's ever really kissed a girl before."

"I hadn't heard of anyone kissing him, but I thought surely..." Parvati looked at him with a little amusement before a full smirk broke out on her face. "So I get to be the first to really kiss you?"

He wasn't sure what to say or do. He didn't want to look weak and admit, but it was the truth. Harry slowly nodded.

"Well, I suppose being the first to kiss you does make up for it." Parvati walked up to him and stood with her feet between his and pressed her body to his as she lifted her arms and put them around his neck. "Put your arms around me and hold me tightly, but don't crush me."

Harry was wondering how she knew about all of this, since she was just finishing fourth year like he was. Deciding in for a Knut in for Galleon, he put his arms around her. One hand went on the small of her back and the other a little higher.

"Perfect," she almost purred in a soft voice. "Now tilt your head a little to the right and do everything I do."

Harry did his best to match her, movement for movement. Her lips were soft. He suddenly felt her tongue touch his lips and he was so surprised he opened his mouth slightly. A moment later, he was glad he had and again tried to match her this way too. The minute they spent kissing was incredible, brilliant, spectacular, and every other superlative he could think of.

Eventually, Parvati pulled back a few inches and smiled. "That's how you kiss a girl, Harry." Still holding on to his neck, she twisted slightly and kissed him on the cheek. "You're forgiven." Still smiling, she let go and left, gliding out of the room.

Harry licked his lips with the tip of his tongue as he stared after her.

A chuckle broke him out of his numb thoughts. He had totally forgotten about Padma. He felt his face grow hot as he looked away. No matter what he did, he could not keep the smile off of his face. "Sorry," he mumbled.

"For what, Harry?" Padma stepped over so she was in front of him, just out of arm's reach.

"I, uh, I wasn't trying to take advantage of your sister or anything..."

Padma's laughter filled the room.

Harry watched her and again noticed how pretty she was. They were practically identical, and yet, there was something about Padma that rang truer with him.

"I believe my sister was trying to take advantage of you, but you seemed to have turned the tables on her. Thank you, Harry. That will give me much to tease her with, and the fact that you did it even when you were initially uncomfortable shows me you really were honest about your apologies."

He carefully looked at her face, the light from the windows warming her brown skin and smile. "I think I owe you one more apology," he said softly, surprising himself for saying what he was thinking.

"Oh?" Padma looked intrigued.

Now what, he asked himself. Since she was waiting, he had no choice but to go ahead. "I'm sorry I didn't ask you to the Ball. I think I asked the wrong sister."

Her eyebrows went up and she colored slightly. "Why do say that?"

"I think you're prettier."

"But we're identical." She looked puzzled.

"Not really. If you dressed just a like, it might take a moment to tell you apart, but you are different and I would be able to tell." He worked up his courage again, and hoped she took this the right way. "Parvati's nice, but I've always like girls who are smart."

Padma looked amused. "Then why didn't you take Hermione to the Ball?"

Harry couldn't stop the snort. "Not likely. She's my best friend, but it would be like taking a sister. I'm not an inbred git like Malfoy."

She laughed. "No, no you're not." She studied him for a moment. "That's why you tried to ask Cho, wasn't it?" In a Parvati-like move, Padma flicked her hair back over one shoulder and took a half step forward.

Harry's heart was starting to race. All he could do was to nod, especially when she slowly licked her lips, the tip of her tongue barely showing.

When she took the other half step forward after a brief moment, his hands seemed to have a mind of their own and encircled her. A moment more and she was leaning forward.

Kissing Padma was sort of like kissing Parvati, but where Parvati was more aggressive, Padma was patient. Harry enjoyed the relaxing and yet passionate kiss. When they broke, she leaned her forehead on his. He would have gone cross-eyed trying to see her, so he just closed his eyes and enjoyed the feeling of her closeness.

"I know why she was gliding now," Padma sighed.

He reveled in her warm breath across his face, as he did in feeling her body pressed to him. This was a feeling that he had been missing all of his life. Mrs Weasley's hugs were nice, but there were still impersonal. He was sure that if he had a real mother, they would be different, and yet this nice feeling. This feeling would be his new memory for a Patronus.

"Harry?" she whispered.

"Hmm?"

"Since it's summer, how about we write each other and really get to know one another. I think we should take things slow."

Harry felt like his head was filled with Treacle, thoughts moving slowly as his senses were still overcome by holding and kissing this pretty girl. "Er, OK. I think I'd like that," he finally said.

"I need to go pack. I know you'll sit with your friends tomorrow, but perhaps we can talk for a few minutes on the train?"

"Sure," he told her, willing to promise her almost anything at the moment. Her holding him even kept his sorrow about Cedric at bay. "What about your sister?"

Padma gave him a soft kiss on the lips before pulling back. "Don't worry about her. I'll talk to her and I'm sure she'll be happy for me. I'll talk to you tomorrow, Harry."

He gave her a crooked smile, causing her to flash him a big grin before gliding out herself. It took him a moment, but Harry finally found control over his body and he walked back to the Tower to pack as well.

When he walked into the common room, he was glad that Parvati wasn't there. He was sure his look would give away what happened between him and Padma, and he didn't want to come between the sisters.

"Harry, where've you been?" Ron called out.

He looked over and saw Ron at a table in front of the chess board. He didn't see Hermione around, which was probably good, as she'd question him right now. He was sure his pleasure was still pasted on his face.

"Just talking to a friend. I gotta go pack," Harry quickly said, so he didn't have to stay around. Without waiting for an answer, he jogged up the stairs.

Ron was still his friend, but his talk with the sisters was making him reevaluate just how close they should be. Perhaps he should spend more time with Neville. He'd think about that this summer.

Of course, he'd think a lot more about Padma.

((A/N: If I were to get Harry together with one of the Patil sisters, this is how I'd do it. While I think it might be fun to write this, I doubt I ever will as I'd have to "finish out" the story, and coming up with a unique way for this pairing is not high on my priority list.

Parvati would understand about Padma wanting to date him and not give her too much grief, at least as long as Padma supplied her with the juicy details.

Harry would meet the Patils on Platform 9 3/4 and they would like him.

So, given that Harry has something to take his mind off of Cedric so he doesn't brood so much, and Padma's letters would tell him that it wasn't his fault, would the scene with the Dementors really happen the same way as in the book? It might not because Harry wouldn't be brooding as much and so he might not be in the park. What would happen to the Dementors (and later the Ministry) if they couldn't reach him because he was in the house? Would they attack others? Maybe Figg and/or Fletcher (when he returned)?

What would his friends' reactions be to Padma? Hermione would probably be supportive. Ron would probably say something about getting a pretty girl, setting Hermione off about how Ron seems to think that outside beauty defines a girl. Ginny is the wildcard, but I think she would be sadly supportive, keeping the British stiff upper lip and hoping H/Padma broke up. Sirius would be happy for him.

Harry would want to please her, so he'd start to take his studies more seriously. Between that and not being sure about Ron, those 2 things would start to divide the two friends so they eventually become normal friends (like he is with Dean), and Harry becomes a close friend with Neville as Neville matures. (This process would probably take the entire fall term of 5th year.)

Padma would instantly realize what happened to Harry's hand and know that a Blood Quill was illegal. Would that spell an early end to

Umbridge's days at Hogwarts? Maybe she'd get Flitwick involved, who would bring out Umbridge's illegal actions.

I view Padma as someone who would stand by Harry, but wouldn't take a place on the front lines. How does that change things?

How would having "2 Hermione-smart girls" support Harry change things? (Yes, Hermione and Padma will get along well. Maybe they'll form a study group of the 3 of them and become the new trio? Would Nev get involved? Would Nev go after Hermione with his new confidence or is Hermione not his type?)

No, Harry will not end up with both sisters. If Parv ever tried to substitute herself for Padma, Harry would notice and nicely chastise her in private. He wouldn't tell Padma until the second time, not wanting to cause a split between the sisters.

By having a girlfriend for 2 years and feeling more centered and self-confident, would Dumbledore's plan of Harry sacrificing himself really work? (NO! Padma would figure out that Harry had a soul fragment in him much sooner and would find a way to remove it, maybe even during 6th year. She would go on the hunt in year 7 with him -- but avoid situations like going into Gringotts -- and she'd probably make Ron stay home, not being able to deal with his childishness. Would that mean that Hermione and Ron never get together? Or would that pairing simply take longer?)

I'm sure there are other fun questions, but those are all that immediately hit me. As always, if you are willing to commit to finishing the story, you may "take" this idea if you let me know.

Kevin))

(A/N: Consider that Tom Riddle "left" the Muggle world around 1945 or so and has spent his time in the Wizarding World ever since. Therefore, he has no real idea what Muggles are capable of as technology has advanced over the last 50 years. Here's a small series of "endings" for Tom. They all have the same set up at the beginning. Assume this first part is attached to all the endings. Also please assume Horcruxes don't exist or they have all been taken care of. This happens during sixth year, maybe?

Reminder, chapters in this story series are not beta'd. Read at your own risk! ;-)

Also, my apologies to those "experts" out there who know a lot more about this tech than what I gleaned from the few minutes I used to look it up on Google. I had a fun idea and ran with it, content not to little things like facts get in my way. :) Please understand this was written with fun in mind, not accuracy. :)

New Technology

Harry, Ron, and Hermione landed and for once did not fall over as they Portkeyed to her parents' house. Professor Dumbledore had been kind enough to help them get there, but with the understanding they would not stay for more than a few hours and they would stay indoors where they could not be observed from the road in front of the Grangers' house.

Harry watched Hermione greet her parents with a suppressed smile, wishing he could experience this with his parents. He was cordial when they turned to him. Ron acted like a deer caught in the headlights; Harry almost laughed at his friend.

The five of them sat in the living room and talked for a while, with the three Grangers doing most of the talking. Harry did his best to follow along and support his friend as she tried to talk her parents into leaving the country for a year.

"Hey, mate," Ron whispered and bumped Harry's elbow with his as the pleas and discussion started to repeat. "Do you really believe this is true? This sounds like fiction to me."

Harry looked over at the magazine that Ron had in his hand, a news periodical he had picked up off the low table in front of them. The open article was about new advances in war technology and how it outstripped the old technology of even ten years earlier. Knowing this was a current news periodical, he whispered back, "Yeah, it's all real."

"Blimey, too bad we can't get some." Ron dropped the magazine back onto the table.

Too bad, Harry thought as he tuned back into the other conversation, but that thought would not leave him. Harry knew the prophecy. He knew what was in store for the world if he should fail. The Muggles would suffer too. It really was too bad they could not round all the Death Eaters up in one place and then "snuff them" with one of the technologies mentioned in the article he had looked at.

Those thoughts circled in his head for the rest of the time he was there. Just before they were about to leave, Harry had an idea. Turning to Mr Granger, he said, "Do you mind if I take this magazine with us?"

"Help yourself," Granger told him. "We'll get the new one in a day or two and we've already read that one."

"Thanks," Harry said with a satisfied smile as he folded it lengthwise and stuck it in a back pocket. They left a few minutes later.

That evening, Harry sat in front of the fire in the Gryffindor Tower and studied the article on war technology very closely. He was not concerned about the latest and greatest since it was all electronic in some way and therefore would not work in a heavy magical environment, but he was thinking very hard about what it was replacing. How hard would it be to get a hold of that? Sirius had left him some money if that was needed, and surely Dumbledore had contacts within the Muggle government, or else he would bet Amelia Bones did.

Hermione came and sat down next to him with her Arithmancy book in hand. "What are you looking at, Harry?"

At the moment, Harry was actually pleased that his dorm mate was off searching for a snack in the kitchens. He really did not want an argument between his two best friends, but he did want Hermione's honest opinion on something.

"Hermione, have you ever considered that Riddle finished Hogwarts around the time of the end of World War 2, entered the Wizarding World, and never looked back?"

"No I haven't, why?"

Harry put the magazine in front of her. "The world has changed a lot in fifty years. He knows nothing of the new technology."

The girl frowned. "Harry, the Wizarding World doesn't do stuff like this. It's not accepted."

"So, are we're going to be so prideful that we'll let ourselves get killed because we don't want to pick up a gun, touch explosives, or take whatever advantage we can get?"

"That is the mindset," she said a little sadly. "Plus, that stuff wouldn't work for us. It's all highly integrated with electronics, and that doesn't work around magic."

He grinned a knowing grin. "That would be true for the stuff here, but what about the stuff that's ten or twenty years old and is being replaced? A lot of it is mechanical, but it's still way more advanced than what Riddle knows about and can deal with." He shared "his weapon idea" with her.

"So all we have to do is put up a thick rock wall, preferably with a steel plate too, around Hogwarts, say twenty feet high and ten feet thick about thirty feet from the castle walls, get Riddle and his merry band of minions here, then unleash the weapon and war over," he outlined.

Hermione actually snorted. "That all well and good ... assuming," she disbelievingly emphasized, "you can get a hold of that and that Dumbledore lets you do that."

Harry considered that for a long moment and Hermione watched him with interest, waiting to see what he would come up with to solve the apparently insurmountable problems.

After a moment, he grinned again. "I think I can solve both of those with a little Slytherin ingenuity."

"Slytherin ingenuity?" Hermione asked with confusion, wonder what that meant.

"You probably know it as blackmail," Harry said as he got up and walked out of the common room, while Hermione sat there and gaped.

Harry went to the Hufflepuff entrance and knocked loudly several times on the door. It took a few minutes, but a young second year female Puff finally answered and almost squeaked when she saw who it was. "I need to talk to Susan Bones ... please. It's urgent."

The girl grinned and turned red as she nodded and then scampered back inside.

A few minutes later, the door opened again and a slightly flushed Susan Bones came out. "Hi Harry," she said little breathlessly as she stared into his eyes. "What can I help you with?"

Harry might have seen how Susan was acting, but he was oblivious to what it meant. "Hey, I need a really big favor. I need to talk to your aunt as soon as possible. Tell her it's about ending the war as soon as possible. Can you please help me get her that message?"

Susan drooped slightly, looking disappointed for a few seconds. Then she perked back up and a smile came over her. "I think I can if you could help me with a small something. But perhaps you should tell me what you want to talk to Auntie about. She might need to do something before she comes to talk to you."

He looked thoughtful for a moment. "No, I don't think so. I just need her to talk to some of the Muggle government leaders about getting me or us something. I figured she would have the right contact to start at the top so this happens faster."

She nodded. "She does work with the Muggle government from time to time."

"Splendid! So, what favor did you need?" Harry asked sincerely, not really thinking about why Susan's expression seemed to be constantly changing between shyness and determination.

"Oh, I think about five minutes of your time should do," she said coyly.

"Sure, we can do it later during the holidays, or I have five minutes now, if that would be better."

"Lovely," Susan said with a big grin and with a determined look, closed the gap between them.

Before Harry knew what was happening, Susan had grabbed the front of his robes and pushed him against the wall before pushing herself against him. It took him only two seconds to realize what favor she wanted. Two seconds to realize kissing Susan was nothing like kissing Cho. He slowly put his arms around her and did his best to endure the "manhandling". It was amazing what he had to do for the war effort.

Eight minutes later, Susan whispered into his ear, "Expect Auntie to show up tomorrow." She smoothed the front of his robes for him. "And Harry, there's more where that came from if you want it, all backed by Hufflepuff loyalty." She winked as she turned and walked back into the Hufflepuff common room.

Harry stood there for a moment, still catching his breath, glad that it was the Yule holidays and no one had walked by. With a goofy grin and a new spring in his step, he finally started moving down the corridor, his mind on the strawberry blonde that had just left him. She was attractive and they had interacted well together in the DA last

year. Thoughts about all other girls were nowhere to be found at the moment.

Despite the slight daze he was in, he made it to Dumbledore's office and gave the password to get up the stairs. At the door to the actual office, he knocked and heard "Enter". Taking a deep breath and vowing to follow his Slytherin instincts, he walked in. Inside, he saw Dumbledore behind his desk, working on paperwork.

"Harry, is something the wrong? Another vision perhaps?"

"No, sir. I had an idea I wanted to run by you." Harry spend the next five minutes giving an overview of his plan. He was not pleased to see the Headmaster's expression grow dark as he finished up.

"While that it is an admirable idea to end the war quickly to prevent loss of innocent life, I'm afraid I can not condone your weapon idea. I simply can not let you do this," Dumbledore told him with a heavy heart.

Harry was afraid of an answer like that, so he pulled out his trump card. "Sir, I don't think you understand. You've said this is my war; that I have to end it..."

"Yes, Harry," the Headmaster cut him off. "You have to end it, but you will need me and others to get to that point. The Wizing World will not accept your weapon."

That chafed him and gave him more determination. "Headmaster, it's you who doesn't understand. The weapon exists whether the Wizing World wants to accept it or not. All I'm asking for is your help to prepare the defenses here at the school so no one but Riddle's side gets hurt. I will arrange for the weapon and I will get Riddle here," Harry said emphatically.

"Harry..."

"Professor Dumbledore! I am not asking for permission, I'm telling you this is how the war will end. It's this way or the highway for me."

Harry stared at the old man, practically daring him to use Legilimency to determine how serious he was.

"You would leave and condemn us all?" Dumbledore asked with incredulity.

Harry leaned forward. "There are seven billion Muggles in over one hundred different countries and I'd have magic to help me hide, as well as those I decided to take with me. All I'm asking from you is three things. One, I need your help, and probably Professor McGonagall's too, to create a protective barrier around the school. Two, I need you to mock Tom for a few minutes when he gets here so all of his forces assemble together and that will also give me a moment to set my sights on him. And three, I need you to otherwise stay out of the way for everything else." He waved his hand as if batting a fly away. "I'm sure there will be a few other small things like getting Hagrid to move into the castle at the right time so he doesn't get hurt, but I will take care of or direct the rest. I'll be speaking to Madam Bones tomorrow about getting the weapon from the Muggles."

Dumbledore sighed and fell back in his chair. "While you probably do know more about the current Muggle world than I, I'm still quite sure the Muggle government will not get involved."

"Please let me worry about that, Professor. There is a chance you're right; however, I'm sure the unexplained disasters we've had lately that some are blaming on terrorists will help to convince them. If not, I'm sure magic can help the weapons disappear for a week or so while we borrow them," Harry said with a smile.

"Harry! You can't steal things from the Muggles! That would cause them to find out about us..."

"I said borrow, Professor. Now, do we have a deal? And that includes not telling Professor Snape until I say it's time." Harry watched the old man struggle with the question. There really was no guessing about the outcome, as the alternative was unthinkable. In reality, he would not totally disappear if Dumbledore said no, but he would wage war much differently than the Headmaster had planned.

With a sad sigh, Dumbledore finally nodded. "Very well, Harry. I do suppose it is your war. I just hope you know what you're getting yourself into."

Harry gave him a cheeky grin. "Probably not, Professor, but I do know what I'm getting myself out of, and that's a stupid prophecy. Cheers!"

Feeling good about it all, Harry returned to Gryffindor Tower planning and scheming along the way.

The next day at lunch, a slightly pink faced Susan Bones came up behind Harry. She placed her left hand on his left shoulder and leaned over to whisper into his right ear. "Auntie is here to talk to you."

He turned to look at her and found her face "right there". With a smile, he said, "Want to come with me?"

Her smile somehow grew. "I'd love to."

He got up and she hooked her arm around his and let him escort her out of the Great Hall, both of them missing a glare from another girl behind them.

Quietly, he said, "You do realize you'll have to keep all of this to yourself, no telling anyone?"

"I'm a Hufflepuff, Harry. I will support you and keep your secrets no matter what, I promise," she said very seriously.

"I hope you're not tested on that," he said, truly hoping Malfoy and his ilk left her alone.

They walked into the Entrance Hall to find Amelia Bones waiting on them. She raised an eyebrow at the two walking arm and arm. Susan returned a smug look.

"Mr Potter."

"Madam Bones, thank you for coming. Could we find a room for some privacy?"

The three found a room and Amelia put up the necessary privacy charms. "Mr Potter, my niece said you had an idea on how to end the war quickly. If I can save the lives of my Aurors and innocent civilians, I'm very willing to listen - especially to the 'Chosen One'." She ended with a smile to let him know she did not take the title the Daily Prophet had given him completely seriously.

Harry grinned a little nervously and did his best to ignore the not so hidden question. "Madam Bones, I have an idea and I've already secured the Headmaster's agreement to cooperate here at Hogwarts, so I believe that's half battle. The other half is my need to acquire something from the Muggles." He spent the next ten minutes explaining his idea.

The woman sat there and attentively listened, not showing any emotion. On the other hand, Susan looked very lost about half way through.

"So if I understand, Mr Potter, you want me to acquire one of these weapons for you with my contacts in the Muggle government?"

"Yes, Madam Bones. I thought you could start at the top where once you convince them of helping, they will say jump and everyone below them will ask 'how high'," he explained with wry grin. "You may have to explain how the disasters from late summer were not disasters and were cause by Riddle and his gang, and how if we don't take care of him, they will have a lot more of that."

"Yes," she drawled, "I can see that being a persuasive argument, especially to get some old weapons they're probably about to scrap anyway. It's just so ... unconventional, you understand."

"I do. Professor Dumbledore had the same problem, but I pointed out that the Muggles have had these weapons for years. Also, I think it would be good for the Wizarding World to see what Muggle weapons can do, to help the Purebloods give the Muggles more respect. I

believe that one day, the two worlds will merge and we must be ready. We need to lose some of our arrogance."

Amelia gave him a grim expression and let out a deep breath. "I would like to say you're wrong, Mr Potter, but you're not the first person to say this and the longer I live I begin to believe you may be correct. Still, you leave me in a difficult position given the way things stand today."

"I understand," Harry said sympathetically. "I truly only need two things from you. One, I need you to arrange for me to get the weapon and ask for me to get a little training, hopefully in a single day. And second, I need it all to be kept to yourself, telling no one, and I truly mean no other witch or wizard. You, Susan, Dumbledore, Hermione, and myself are all who know and that's the way I want to keep it until just before it all comes down."

"And afterwards?" she asked, still not showing which way she was leaning.

"I'd like to return the weapon to the Muggles, finish up whatever school time I have left, and then live my life as normally as possible," he told her.

She glanced at her niece, who was still sitting next to Harry with a hand on his arm. "And your intentions towards my niece?" She was secretly pleased to see each of them blush, which she took as a sign that they were not that far along yet.

"We're just friends for now, getting to know one another better." He looked at the girl next to him, who pinked slightly again, but held his gaze. "As for the future ... I'm ... open to possibilities."

Amelia finally let a wan smile out. "That does not affect my decision, but it's nice to hear. As for your request, I find it intriguing. Let me have lunch a few of my 'other friends' and see if I find any interest."

Harry grinned broadly. "Thank you very much, Madam Bones. I will say that this needs to happen before June."

"It's not guaranteed, Harry, but I'll do my part and see if I can make arrangements for you," she said. "In the meantime, could you please wait outside for a moment? I need a few words with my niece before you escort her back to lunch."

"Certainly," he said, doing his best not to wonder about their conversation, while quite sure it was about him.

A minute or so later, a very red Susan came out of the room, followed by an amused looking Amelia Bones. Susan reattached herself to Harry's arm as the head of the MLE bade them good-bye.

Harry escorted her back into the Great Hall, but Susan pulled him towards the Hufflepuff table. Susan sat him next to Hannah Abbott and then took the place on his other side. He rather enjoyed the Hufflepuff hospitality, not to mention the attention of the strawberry blonde who seemed to alternate between being shy and being bold.

(Ending 1 - My First Idea)

One weekend in March, he, Hermione, and Amelia Bones travelled to a government building and then to a military base. After a consultation and a brief demonstration, it was decided that a heavy machine gun was the answer. The older model did not have any electronics, and it's few modern needs, like the belt system to feed in the bullets, could be changed so magic would drive the mechanisms. That change would have to be done after they "took it home".

A couple of Squib soldiers were assigned to Amelia and went with them. Amelia created a Portkey to a desolate place for the change to the gun and for practicing. Harry used up a lot of ammo and destroyed a number of trees as well as a herd of transfigured rocks into cows. He was quite pleased with the results.

Back at the school. Dumbledore and McGonagall worked furiously one night to put up the barriers around the school.

Dumbledore also created a fake prophecy by Trelawney. Snape was given the fake prophecy the next day when he asked why the barriers

were there. Dumbledore did a good acting job when he said they only had to keep Harry safe at school for two weeks.

The beauty of it was the prophecy said that unless Riddle attacked by mid-summer, he could not win. Mid-summer was in two weeks, so that should force him to attack very soon. Harry knew exactly when Riddle heard the news, as his scar hurt fiercely for an hour. Snape also returned from that meeting with a limp he never recovered from.

Hagrid visited the centaurs and told them to take a holiday deep into the forest for the next month. He then moved into the castle. Hagrid did not like living in the castle, but he understood. His class became completely theoretical.

All of the faculty understood, when they were told the next two weeks were critical to their survival and that they had to stay inside the castle. Once she understood the gravity of the situation, Professor Sprout moved a number of rare plants inside to use for classes.

To help with that survival, Susan Bones and a few other Hufflepuffs secretly made most of the sixth year Slytherins and a few seventh year Slytherins disappear into an unused area of the castle where they were kept unconscious and a prisoner. The most amusing thing to Harry was no one suspected it was the Hufflepuffs who did it. The staff all kept looking at the Gryffindors who could honestly deny doing anything to the Slytherins.

Harry's last preparation was to dig a single tunnel under the barrier and install his machine gun in. There were a number of illusions and disillusion incorporated into the defenses, so Harry's gun would not be the only piece of magic on the other side of the wall.

After that, it was only waiting and watching. Harry stayed near his area in a room just inside the castle, as did the Squib soldiers. He studied, he talked, he even had some fun, but he never left his post once Riddle had the fake prophecy. Even his friends knew they had to go to him to spend time with him.

Hermione, Ron, and Susan spent the most time there, usually telling Harry what he missed in class and helping him to revise.

One week after Snape had told Riddle, Harry was woken early one morning with severe pain in his scar. This was it, he knew. Voldemort was angry and he was about to do something. Harry quickly woke his helpers and they all got ready.

They had time for a hurried breakfast and then some until Voldemort showed up at the front gates. He easily had a hundred Death Eaters. There were also a dozen trolls, three giants, a dozen Dementors, and about forty unkempt men - who Harry assumed were werewolves.

Dumbledore arrived as Harry was looking through the periscope on the wall to see the enemy. "There's no backing out now, Harry. Are you ready?" he gravely asked.

"Very," he said tightly. "It looks like they're all coming in. Headmaster, if you would taunt him a little, although do try to not get killed."

Dumbledore's sparkling personality reappeared for a moment. "I shall try. Professor McGonagall is reinforcing the front gate with more stone. Good luck, Harry."

Harry abandoned the periscope and crawled through the tunnel under the barrier to his machine gun on the outside. It was mounted at waist height and ready. His helpers were ready to feed the bullets, but firing it was going to be all up to him.

Riddle led his troops and stopped in before the front gate, about twenty yards out. Harry was a little off to the side of the gate, so Riddle was close and would be easy to hit first.

"Dumbledore! Give me the boy and no one else need get hurt!" Riddle shouted.

"I don't think so, Tom. I won't give anyone to you," Dumbledore's amplified voice replied.

"You can't stand against us, Dumbledore!"

"He doesn't have to, you bastard," Harry muttered. "Let's rock and roll!" he told his helpers.

Harry pulled the trigger with the muzzle of gun pointing right at Tom Riddle and held it there for almost a full second before he started to move it back and forth, covering the entire field. The gun fired over a thousand bullets a minute, so that one second on a single individual spewed sixteen bullets and cut him in half, as well as over a dozen people behind him as the bullets did not immediately stop.

A few Death Eaters were quick enough to put up a shield, but the energy of the bullets and the vast number of them shattered the shields very quickly and those Death Eaters died as well.

The trolls and giants fared no better, even though it took a few more bullets per creature to take them down.

When Harry let the gun spin down half a minute later, only the Dementors were not dead and they were fleeing.

"Take that, you murdering bastard," Harry said, just before he slumped down, glad it was all over. He looking forward to a more normal life.

(Ending 2 - Sharing Some Steel)

One weekend in March, he, Hermione, and Amelia Bones travelled to government building and then to a military base. After a consultation and a brief demonstration, it was decided that some of the older land mines would work, as long as the triggering mechanism was changed so magic would set them off, preferably all at once. That change would have to be done after they "took it home". Harry and Hermione were given a crash course in how the device worked, and then they were given multiple crates of the devices, which Amelia shrunk so they could take them all at once.

Harry and Hermione spent all of their free time over the next week making and then going into the forest to test the change. When they made the new trigger work, they started changing all of the rest of the devices.

Two weeks before mid-summer, Harry set it all in motion, starting with Dumbledore giving Snape a fake prophecy from Trelawney to be leaked to Voldemort. That night, the house-elves of Hogwarts buried land mines one foot apart across the entire field in front of the school.

Now, it was a matter of waiting. Harry had classes to try to keep his mind off of the upcoming battle. Susan Bones also helped a great deal, spending time with Harry, talking about each of their pasts, as well as some quality "couple time" in a few broom closets. He had yet to ask her to be his girlfriend, but he was finding it harder and harder not to, especially with the battle coming so soon. He was beyond ready to be normal and only have to worry about school, girls, and Quidditch.

Early one morning a week before mid-summer, Harry awoke with a sharp pain in his scar. It was not hard to guess what caused that, so he hurriedly got dressed and ran for Dumbledore's office. The old man was already up and agreed the front gates had been forced open. They both hurried to the front door and climbed up the stairs so they could stand on top of the barrier around the school. It was painful to watch the enemy horde approach and do nothing.

Voldemort stopped in front of the gates. He easily had a hundred Death Eaters. There were also a dozen trolls, three giants, a dozen Dementors, and about forty unkempt men - who Harry assumed were werewolves. They were all within the mined area, for which Harry was thankful.

The Dark Lord wore an evil smirk as looked up at Dumbledore and Potter. "Potter, be a good lad and come on down. If you do, I won't hurt anyone in the school."

Harry chuckled to himself and muttered. "Sure you won't, you'll just have all your followers do it."

Dumbledore grunted in agreement while holding his wand ready should Riddle try something too soon.

"I only have one thing to say to you!" He paused to see if the bait would be taken. Harry really wanted to taunt the man one last time.

"You surrender?" Voldemort suggested with an evil chuckle, which caused some low laughter among the Death Eaters nearest him.

"My name is Harry Potter. You killed my father. Prepare to die. Ignio!" With the wand movement, Harry dived to the left and cast a shield over himself, while he prayed the front of the wall protected him for the worst of the blast. At the same time, Dumbledore turned and jumped, willing to risk a broken leg or hip to avoid the blast.

The entire field erupted in flames and flying shrapnel. A few small chunks of metal rained down on his shield, but there was not enough force for them to collapse it.

Harry was impressed by how quiet it was now. He took shield down and walked to the front of the barrier and looked down through the settling dust. Then he became sick and threw up what little food he had eaten that morning. There were red splotches and body parts all over the field, including near the front gate. Voldemort's body lay unmoving. Just to be sure, Harry sent a cutting curse at it and cut it in half.

Looking towards the back near the forest, he saw that even the trolls and Giants were down. Four of the Dementors were slowly fleeing. The other eight seemed to have been destroyed by the explosives.

It was a good day, Harry thought, until ringing in his ears started getting the best of him. Fortunately, his hearing did return. He was glad the war was all over and he was looking forward to a more normal life.

(Ending 3 - Playing Catch)

One weekend in March, he, Hermione, and Amelia Bones travelled to government building and then to a military base. After a consultation and a brief demonstration, it was decided that some of the older "pineapple cluster bombs" from the sixties and seventies would work. They would not even have to be changed to work with magic as they

would explode after a safety pin was pulled and then they were dropped. Harry and Hermione were given a crash course in how the device worked and how to use them. They were given multiple crates of the devices, which Amelia shrunk so they could take them all at once.

As a bonus, the soldiers threw in a small "canon" and several drums of a fluid called Napalm. After a demonstration of that, Amelia Bones suggest it might be good against Dementors, which the other two had to agree with. It was truly nasty stuff.

Back at school, Harry recruited some help from his most trusted friends in the DA: Hermione, Ron, Ginny, Neville, Katie, Luna, Susan, Hannah, and Ernie. He also pulled in the Weasley twins, Bill, Fleur, Remus, and Tonks. All swore oaths of secrecy.

All of his helpers arranged to meet in the very early morning hours while it was still dark to practice banishing the "pineapples" using some training ones that could not explode. They learned how to banish (or shoot) the approximately two pound bombs to various places on the field in front of the school.

Ron took the little canon and they made it work with water so he could train. Hermione make the pump work on magic.

With everything ready, Harry set it all in motion two weeks before mid-summer. Dumbledore gave Snape a fake prophecy to be leaked to Voldemort. The non-student helpers moved into the castle, spending most of their time in the guest quarters area to hide their presence. Now, it was a matter of waiting.

Harry had classes to try to keep his mind off of the upcoming battle. Susan Bones also helped a great deal, spending time with Harry, talking about each of their pasts, as well as some quality time in a few broom closets.

Early one morning a week before mid-summer, Harry awoke with a sharp pain in his scar. It was not hard to guess what caused that, so he hurriedly got dressed, woke his friends, and ran for Dumbledore's office. The old man was already up and agreed the front gates had

been forced open. Dumbledore hurried to the front door and climbed up the stairs so he could stand on top of the barrier around the school, drawing Riddle to him. Harry and friends ran to the Astronomy Tower and Disillusioned themselves.

Voldemort stopped in front of the gates. He easily had a hundred Death Eaters. There were also a dozen trolls, three giants, a dozen Dementors, and about forty unkempt men - who Harry assumed were werewolves. They were all within range for their banishing spells, for which Harry was thankful.

"Ron, don't forget, you can't fire until our first round of bombs explodes. Also, aim for the Dementors first," Harry quietly commanded, as he picked up his first "pineapple", pulled the safety pin, and then disillusioned it. He, and everyone else who was doing the same thing were being exceedingly careful not to drop the bombs now that they were "live".

Looking down, it appeared Dumbledore was engaging Voldemort in dialog.

"Ready everyone... Oh, and I've got Riddle," Harry said.

"Dibs on Malfoy," Ginny quickly added.

"I want the trolls," Hermione told everyone.

"The Werewolves are mine," Remus called.

Harry directed the others to take various points so the whole field was targeted. When he saw Dumbledore make a gesture with both hands as if giving up, Harry simply said, "Now," and then banished his bomb.

As soon as it was flying, Harry quickly picked up another, pulled the safety pin, and banished it just as the first round hit the ground and exploded.

Each bomb exploded on impact and sent two hundred ball bearings out at ballistic speeds, cutting through any flesh that was nearby and then probably through the next couple of people as well.

As the explosions started, Ron pulled the trigger and a fiery stream left his "canon". His aim was close to the Dementors, so he "walked" it over to the foul creatures. After covering them in the burning gel, he moved the stream of burning gel around the area, trying to hit what was left of the trolls and giants. He would have tried to get Voldemort for fun, but he could not see him standing. He did noticed that Dumbledore had jumped off the barrier and was limping the short distance towards the castle; so he should be safe.

After the seventh round of bombs, Harry called, "Cease fire!" He looked through the smoke that was on the field below. The only movement he saw was dust settling. "If everyone will put the bombs you have left into my crate please," he said in a sad voice.

He hated what he had just finished, but it had to be done. Of course, perhaps now he and the rest of the Wizarding World could have a normal life as the Dark Lord was gone, and he was glad for that.

(A/N: There's probably other ways, but these seemed like the easiest and gets the point across that Muggles are far better at killing than Wizards. :)

Title: Tired

Rating: PG, A/U

Summary: After hearing the prophecy and Dumbledore's explanations for things at the end of fifth year, Harry become tired of the same things happening and tries a different path.

Warning: Unbeta'd

A/N: No real pairing, but one is implied at the end. This starts with the explanations in Dumbledore's office after the fight in the DoM at the end of year 5...)

Tired

Harry still raged internally. He had finished raging externally - Dumbledore's office was quite the mess. He felt some guilt, shame even, as he considered what he had done, but it was easily suppressed. A part of his brain continued to listen to the end of the Headmaster's explanation, but most of him was thinking about what it all meant to him.

There were so many things he should have been told before now and all Dumbledore could say was that he cared too much and had wanted Harry to have a childhood. He had had a little bit of "recovered childhood" when he had started here at Hogwarts, but it had not lasted long. The troll had seen to that. Meeting Voldemort twice that year had added to his "loss". Killing the basilisk and diary and completely ended any thoughts he had about a "new childhood".

What had he thought when they got caught giving the baby dragon to Charlie Weasley? Oh yes, he had told himself that did not need to stick his nose into other people's business. He mentally snort at that thought. He had kept to that position for maybe six weeks before he was chasing after the Philosopher's stone.

Then there had been the diary, his godfather, actually trying to win the Triwizard Tournament which led to Voldemort getting a new body, his insistence to Umbridge that Voldemort was back, and finally his rushing off to the Ministry of Magic to try to save his godfather. Blimey he was an complete and total idiot! He should have left it all alone.

Still, it was obvious he was not completely at fault. There were so many things that had been kept from him. After a moment, he

considered that he had been like a mushroom: planted in the dark, fed some dung and watered occasionally, and brought out only when the adults could not do something. It occurred to him that's really what the prophecy was about: the true final task they needed him for, and that made him a weapon. How comforting, he thought sarcastically.

He heard Dumbledore finishing his explanation about the prophecy as Harry looked out the window into the early dawn.

"Do you understand, Harry?"

"I do," he said slowly and in a monotone, not turning to face the old man. A vague idea was starting to form in his head and he really wanted time to think about it. At the same time, the grief for his recently lost godfather was threatening to rip what little control he had from him.

"I feel I owe you another explanation, Harry," said Dumbledore hesitantly. "You may, perhaps, have wondered why I never chose you as a prefect? I must confess ... that I rather thought ... you had enough responsibility to be going on with." (quoted from OotP)

When Dumbledore finally became silent, Harry knew the explanations were done. He could ask anything he wanted, but he would get a vague answer at best, or mostly likely a question in return.

"I understand," he said, again without emotion as he tried to hold everything in. Not really having anything meaningful to say, he tossed out, "I need to think about it all," as he turned and walked to the door without a glance at the old man. This time, the door opened for him and he left the Headmaster's office.

He passed a few small groups as they headed towards the Great Hall for breakfast. Most gave him a strange look for his dirty clothes at this time of the morning, but he really did not care.

In his dorm room, he was grateful that Dean and Seamus were not there. Gathering his bathroom things, he headed to the showers and cast a Silencing charm on the last stall. He stood in the hot water

longer than he ever had before, letting his tears for his dead godfather wash down the drain, washing his loss and frustration about it all away - or at least he tried to.

Heading back to his bed, he cast more Silencing charms around his bed and lied down, thankful that his last OWL had been yesterday. He would have taken a Pepperup Potion to force himself to stay up and plan if he did not have a week left before they headed home. Instead, he let his options drift around in his head until he fell asleep. He would consider what he should do and plan later today.

Waking in mid-afternoon, Harry rose and dressed. Looking around his dorm, he saw that Neville's bed curtain was closed, so Madam Pomfrey must have fixed and released him. He was glad Neville was not hurt badly, although he did feel badly that Neville had broken his father's wand. He was sure Neville's Gran would be upset with him for that.

Walking down to the common room, he arrived just in time to see Ginny walk through the portrait hole.

"Hi Harry," she said brightly, although softly.

"Ginny," he returned with a nod. "Madam Pomfrey let you go?"

"Yeah, only a few minutes ago. Neville and Luna were released this morning after breakfast." She stopped and looked like she was not sure she wanted to continue, but she finally said, "Madam Pomfrey says Ron and Hermione will be all right, but they're still at St Mungo's and won't come back until tomorrow. They'll have to stay with her for at least a few days though."

Harry nodded slowly, taking it in; part of him wanted to apologize to her. He must not have kept his thought to himself as much as he desired, because she walked over to stand in front of him.

"It's not your fault," she said very softly. When he started to protest, she put a hand on his arm to stop him. "It was our decision to come with you. You tried to make us stay, but we decided to come."

He still wanted to protest and apologize, but she shook his arm slightly to force him to look at her.

"Not only is it not your fault, but I'd go again knowing what I know now. You helped to keep us alive, not only by telling us what to do, but by teaching the DA this year. It's not your fault that you were tricked, and I know a lot about that," she told him with a fierce look.

He slowly nodded, understanding she was talking about her experience with the diary, but not really wanting to talk about it. "Thanks, Ginny."

"The others won't blame you either, Harry."

A sigh escaped, but he did not argue with her.

Ginny yawned for a moment. "Sorry," she told him. "I'm going to go rest until dinner. I'll see you later."

He bid her good-bye and then walked out of Gryffindor Tower and to his favorite place near the lake. There, he sat and thought about what Dumbledore had told him, especially about the Prophecy.

With the information he had learned early this morning, many of Dumbledore's actions started to make sense, at least as much as they could to Harry. He did not agree with most of the decisions, but at least he understood them better.

The phrases "mark him as his equal", "power the Dark Lord knows not", "must die", and "neither can live while the other survives" ran through his head. He considered each, especially in light of what Dumbledore had told him. However, after a time, he started to wonder if Dumbledore really had the correct interpretation.

Harry considered Trelawney to be a fraud, at least most of the time. However, in their fourth year, the Professor had stressed that the interpretation of prophecies were tricky before they were fulfilled, and normally could only be correctly interpreted after they were fulfilled. That he did agree with.

"Mark, power, die, can't live and will survive," he muttered to himself, letting his idea grow.

His stomach eventually rumbled, reminding him that it was dinner time. He was thankful that he had spent the last couple of hours alone. It had settle him, at least a little. He did his best not to think about Sirius at the moment. He was not ready for that again - maybe tomorrow.

Ron and Hermione came back the next day and stayed in Madam Pomfrey's care until a few days before it was time to leave. He made sure to visit them and let them know he was sorry for getting them hurt. They were both adamant that it was not his fault, just like Ginny had told him, and as Neville and Luna had told him when he talked to them.

While his closest friends were still recovering, he spent most of his free time by himself and planned. Articles in the Daily Prophet about the Ministry finally acknowledging Voldemort's return and the vindication of his story from a year ago appeared - all without a hint of regret for what they said about him. While part of him was happy that the truth was finally being printed, most of him was disgusted it had taken so long and at what had happened during the year.

Harry knew most of the people in the ministry were probably good-hearted like Arthur Weasley, but with people like Fudge and Umbridge there and at the top, he was disgusted with the Ministry too. The fact that they let Death Eaters work there, like Walden Mcnair, only compounded his ill-will.

One task he made sure to do on his last day of school was to visit Professor McGonagall. The second that Umbridge was gone, he went to see his head of house. A short conversation about his broom and she had a house-elf retrieve it for her before she handed it to him. He thanked her profusely.

He could not fail to notice that his friends looked at him with concern on the train ride back to London. He knew some of the concern came from his being so quiet, or brooding as Hermione might say. Honestly,

he couldn't help it and he decided that it was probably better this way. He needed to protect them.

As they all left the train, Harry cast a Featherweight Charm on his trunk. It should last for several hours, long enough for him to complete what he needed to.

Hedwig was flying back from school with the instructions to find him when she could, so her cage was shrunk and in his trunk. He had no doubt his most faithful friend would find him.

Doing his best to act normal, he said good-bye to all of his friends and promised to write soon, as did they the same.

Going "outside" to the Muggle part of the station, he saw a scene that made him angry, although he held it in. He knew Moody, Tonks, Lupin, and Mr Weasley meant well trying to scare his relatives into better behavior, but Harry knew this would really provoke worse behavior when they arrived back at #4 Privet Drive. Worse, he could not stop them now that they had started, he just had to wait and let the intimidation run its course.

When the "conversation" was done, Harry finally walked over. "I'm ready to go, Aunt Petunia." It was really safest to ignore Vernon at times like this. His relatives turned and left without saying a word to him.

"Write us every few days and let us know you're all right," Lupin told him. "If we don't hear from you, we'll come over."

Harry looked at him blankly for a short moment. "Thanks for making my life at their house more difficult," he said without emotion and walked quickly after his relatives, glad that his trunk was lightened. He suspected that he had surprised Lupin with his remark, but frankly, he did not really care at the moment. He had one task on his mind and the Order had just made it twice as difficult.

He caught up to his relatives just before they reached Vernon's car. It was impossible to miss Vernon's red neck from the back, a sure sign of his anger. Nevertheless, his uncle popped the lid to the boot of the

car for Harry to slide his trunk into. Harry closed the lid and sat in the back seat. Dudley eyed him warily but otherwise said nothing, just like everyone else.

As they started to pull out of the car park, Harry spoke up, knowing he did not have much time. "I'm sorry about what they said to you back in the station. I didn't ask them to do that and I would have tried to stop them if they had told me before."

Vernon did not look in his mirror at Harry or say anything, although it did sound like he might have been grinding his teeth. Harry was not sure if the silence was good or bad, but hoped for the former.

"We'll pass Charring Cross Road on the way home. If you'll stop there for a minute and let me pull my trunk out of the boot, I'll leave and you'll never have to see me or put with me again." Harry practically prayed for success.

Vernon finally glanced in the rearview mirror at him; his tone was as angry as his expression. "Even if I did that ... boy, how do I know they wouldn't bring you back anyway?"

It was actually a very reasonable question.

"Because I plan to go somewhere they can't find me before they even miss me," Harry replied.

Vernon considered that for a moment. "And how do we know we can trust you to do that?"

Harry noticed that his uncle had turned the car towards Charring Cross Road, so there was hope. "In a way, I suppose you can't know. All I can say is that I don't want to burden you anymore and I don't want to return to ... my school. Just like I did my best to protect Dudley last summer when we were attacked, I'll do my best now to keep this promise to your family." He watched Vernon consider that and then look to his aunt. She nodded, never looking at Harry.

The car turned another few corners before they were on Charring Cross.

"If you'll stop in the next block, I'll get out there," he informed them. His uncle grunted, but complied. When they stopped, Vernon popped the lid to the boot and looked in his mirror at his nephew. "Thank you for working with me. I never considered what it meant for me to be dumped on your porch for you to take me in - never being asked, that is until recently. It wasn't my fault, but I'm sorry it happened to you."

Without waiting for an answer, he left the car quickly, retrieved his trunk, and shut the lid of the boot. After walking to the sidewalk and looking at his relatives one last time, he saw his aunt turn and look at him for the first time of the trip. She gave him a slight nod as the car pulled away. He was not sure if that was her saying good-bye, a sign of respect for acknowledging their burden, or what.

Shrugging, he turned and walked to the Leaky Cauldron. This was going to be the most difficult part. With his head down to try and hide his face, he walked into the pub and straight to the back. He got lucky that Tom was turned and talking to his helper. In the back by the portal, he was alone, so he pulled his wand and did a coloring charm on his hair, making it blond - not worrying about the magic being traced to him because there was so much of it around him.

Entering Diagon Alley, he headed for the bank, again keeping his head down. Fortunately, there was a teller open so he did not have to wait.

"I need to talk to someone about changing my vault," he said quietly.

The goblin slowly looked up. "What do you need to do?" he asked surly and not lowering his voice.

"I need to discuss branches," Harry replied, hoping he did not have to spell it all out for the goblin. He also hoped Bill Weasley was not in the office today.

The goblin looked at him for a long moment before he said, "Follow me." He slid off of his stool and walked to the side and opened a door. "Wait in there." He pointed to a small bare office.

Harry was glad to be out of the lobby and readily complied. The door was shut and he waited. There were two chairs on this side of the plain wooden desk and one chair on the other side. The room was only slightly larger than his bedroom at the Dursleys and had plain white walls. The goblins probably could not have made the room any more boring if they had tried.

About five minutes later, an older goblin walked in and sat behind the desk. "I'm an account manager. Your key?"

Harry fished it out of his pocket and handed it over.

The goblin held it for a moment before placing it on the desk in front of Harry. "My name is Snokrok. I'm an account manager. What do you need, Mr Potter?"

"Do you have branches in other countries?"

"In all major European countries," came the bored answer.

"Are there any problems moving what's in my vault to one of your other branches?"

"For a half a percent of the gold, we can transfer it in three days. For a full one percent, we can do it in twenty-four hours or less. We do not move non-monetary items," he said stiffly.

"Is there a Potter Family account?" Harry knew the Blacks had one, so should not the Potters?

"Yes."

"Can I access it?"

The goblin still look bored. "You're at least eleven, so yes."

That shocked Harry. Why had that been kept from him?

"Very well. I would like to see the Potter Family vault to retrieve any non-monetary items, then I would like all of the money in all the Potter

vaults moved to France within the next day. You can place it all in one vault. Once that is done, I would like to stop renting the vaults here. Do you also handle other financial transactions, such as selling property?" Harry watched the goblin look at him more thoughtfully now, the boredom gone.

After a moment, the goblin asked, "You are leaving England?"

"Will my answer and plans stay confidential?"

"Of course." The goblin look slightly offended.

"My apologies, but no one has ever explained that or many other things to me." Harry was relieved that seemed to mollify the goblin. "In that case, yes, I want to leave Britain. I want to sell all my properties, with the exception of the Potter family house - if there is one, and otherwise end all of my ... dealings here."

Snokrok looked a little upset, but the look passed quickly. "I see. Gringotts can accommodate you, Mr Potter, although there will be our usual seller's fee of five percent."

Harry almost agreed until he considered the goblin's look a moment ago. "How much are we talking about, Mr Snokrok? How much does my family own?"

Another look of anger flashed, one that was also almost missed. "The Potter Family estate is approximately three percent of the wealth in Britain. No," Snokrok quickly said, "yours is not the wealthiest family; but you do own a lot."

"In that case," Harry said, trying his best not change his bland expression, "I think a three percent seller's fee would be more reasonable, since you will be making so much. Or if you prefer, I can go find someone else to do it." He almost swore he heard a low growl, but he hoped he had imagined it.

"Four percent and not a Knut less," Snokrok said, his voice deepening.

Harry considered that. "Agreed, as long as you place the money for the sales in my account in France without the one percent transfer fee."

Snokrok definitely looked upset now, but nodded. "Agreed."

"If someone will take me to my family vault, I'd like to look to see what's in there that I need to move. I suppose I'll have to go get a trunk for that. When I return, I can sign any forms you have for me and get a new key?"

The goblin agreed and called Griphook to take Harry down to the vaults.

Harry only had to touch the doors to the family vault, which pricked his hand for a blood sample, and they opened. He was surprised that the vault was not all that large. Sure, it was significantly bigger than his school expense vault, but it was not massive.

"How much money is here?" he asked the goblin.

Griphook walked over to a parchment stuck to the wall next to the door. "Exactly or in round numbers?"

"Round numbers will work."

"A little less than four hundred thousand Galleons."

Harry was impressed. This amount of money gave him a lot of options, and that was before the sale of the properties.

Fortunately for him, all the money was on one side of the vault and the "items" were on the other side. Harry examined what was there. He found a few portraits of people he did not know, some jewelry in a box, and several boxes of papers which had what looked like addresses on the outside. A good multi-compartment trunk would work well. He left his school trunk there although he picked up a bag of Galleons.

Going back up, Harry stopped by the bookstore and bought a book of maps. He then hurried to the trunk store and bought a seven compartment trunk like he had seen in Moody's room. He also made sure the trunk had a permanent Featherweight charm on it, as well as a way to shrink it down to briefcase size and back up with only a touch of his wand.

He hurried back to Gringotts, knowing time was of the essence. Snokrok took him back to the office.

"Mr Potter, are you aware that you are the heir of the recently deceased Sirius Black?"

Harry had to think about that. "I believe Sirius did mention I was his heir at Christmas, but I honestly had not thought about it." As he did, his depressed feelings returned full force.

Snokrok placed the folder in his hand on the desk and opened it. "This is his Will and last wishes. I will give you a copy to read later, but the summary of it is that you are his heir. He left the Black ancestral home that's in London, with no address, to a Remus Lupin, except for the library, which is yours. Everything else owned by the Black family was left to you."

"Err," Harry did not know what to say. "I wish I knew how to get the library without going there."

"As we have no address for it, we can't help."

For a fee, Harry was sure. He suddenly had an idea. "If there was a family elf who lived in the ancestral home, would he have to obey me or Remus Lupin?"

Snokrok looked surprised at the idea. "You."

"May I call him here?"

"Only to this office. Call him by name as the heir of the house of Black."

Harry nodded and then firmly said, "Kreacher, come to the me, the heir of the house of Black."

Surprisingly to Harry, the elf popped in and looked around. When he saw Harry, he started to mutter angrily. "Did the half-blood traitor call Kreacher?"

"Kreacher, shut up," Harry said firmly and the elf immediately stopped talking. "I have orders for you. First, take this new trunk. Go to the ancestral house where you live and pack all the books in the library or that are supposed to be in the library into the largest compartment. Be sure you shrink them down to as small as they will go without damaging them, and in a way that I can restore their size with a simple 'Finite Incantantum'. Do you understand?" The elf nodded. "Good, go do that and return here as quickly as possible, and don't say anything to anyone in the house." The elf grabbed the trunk handle and popped away. Snokrok looked at Harry a little differently, but the wizard was unable to discern its meaning.

Snokrok pushed some papers in front of Harry. "Sign these to show you have received your part of the Black estate." Harry did so. "Sign these for the work requested."

Harry looked at those much more carefully than he did for the papers about the Black estate. Finding them correct, he signed them too.

"As soon as your elf returns, I will take you to your vaults to retrieve the property papers for us to sell." Snokrok started to look at some papers and otherwise ignored Harry while they waited.

Kreacher returned a few minutes later with the trunk. Harry found out the Kreacher knew where the Potter ancestral home was too and sent the elf there to collect the library and any talking portraits. That took another ten minutes and grated on Snokrok's nerves, but Harry pretended he did not notice.

This time when Kreacher returned, Harry gave him the final order of the day. "Kreacher, I want you to return home and act normal, or normal for you. However, you may not say anything about what you did for me today or even that you saw me today. While you are to be

helpful to Remus Lupin as he now owes the house, you are to never help anyone find out where I am or say anything about what I ask you to do. Do you understand?" The elf nodded slowly, obviously hating the orders. "You may start to speak again when you return home. Oh, and you are never to speak to the Malfoys or Lestranges ever again. Now go home." Kreacher popped away unhappy.

Snokrok took him to his vaults this time. Harry emptied his school vault into his trunk. The approximately twenty thousand Galleons easily fit. In his family vault, Snokrok took all the deeds except one: the Potter ancestral home. Harry shrunk all the items down before placing them in his trunk and also took several compartments of Galleons. The only things he left out were his Firebolt and Invisibility Cloak. The trunk was shrunk and a strap appeared, allowing him to sling it over a shoulder for easy carrying.

Harry changed some gold into French Francs before he thanked Snokrok and left. The goblin ignored him as he walked into the back of the bank. Harry did not understand why the goblins were so unfriendly. Some courtesy would probably make people want to do more business there.

For a last stop, Harry went to the Diagon Alley post office. There he paid for seven letters to be sent, but not until tomorrow evening's owls went out. He quickly added a postscript to one before he handed them over. As he was about to leave, he asked the man there if he could check him for tracking charms as he put five Galleons on the counter. The man chuckled but did the scan. Harry was relieved there were none.

As it was starting to get dark, Harry knew he needed to hurry and leave. The Dursleys should be getting back home very soon and it might be noticed that he was not in the car. He hurried to the Leaky Cauldron, putting his Invisibility Cloak on after going through the portal but before entering the pub. He carefully walked through and then left out the far door to the Muggle world when Tom was looking the other way.

In Muggle London, Harry avoided people and made his way to the nearest alley. From there, he mounted his Firebolt and took off, flying

slowly and high, just like he had last summer when going to Sirius's house.

He considered his feelings about his godfather as he flew south and a little east. He knew he had made mistakes and had some blame for his godfather's death, but he also could see the logic that most of the blame was Dumbledore's. Still, that did not ease his troubled emotions much.

Sunlight disappeared about the time he came to the English channel. As he was now away from people, he urged his broom to maximum speed. It did not take long for lights to appear in front of him, showing him the coast of France. As the air chilled from the night, Harry dropped altitude to make it a little warmer. He also put a warming charm on himself, knowing the Ministry "back home" could not stop him and he was not registered with the French Ministry.

The bright lights of Paris appeared on the horizon a little before midnight. Harry was very glad as he was now quite tired.

He found a small hotel and entered. The clerk did not know much English, but it was not too hard for Harry to put some money on the counter and ask for a "small room". The clerk took some of his money and gave him a key. The man also flashed twelve fingers at Harry and then motioned as if Harry should leave. Harry understood, he had until noon tomorrow. That was fine with him.

The plan was to get up late, get some food, then travel into the middle of Paris. Snokrok had told him where to find the Paris Gringotts. He would get some help to find a hotel there and some information as he decided where to go next.

While he had some doubts about his plan, he felt this was the best thing for everyone, especially himself. The main point was, his friends would be safe if they did as he asked.

The next day, Harry had breakfast and then donned his Invisibility Cloak in an Alley and resumed his journey on his broom, flying slowly and high in the air. Snokrok's directions were spot on and he easily

found the Paris version of Diagon Alley and the Gringott's branch here.

The goblins here were a little friendlier, but not by much. Still, Harry presented a letter from Snokrok and received the key to his new vault and was told about half of the gold had arrived last night and the rest would be available later today.

Harry converted more money to French Francs and went on a clothes shopping spree, to better fit in here. He also found a decent Muggle hotel nearby, so he could remain close the WIZARDING area but not in it. The rest of the day was spent looking through the items in his trunk that had come from his family vault and house. He was disappointed, but not surprised, to not find a talking portrait with his parent in it.

Late that afternoon in London, seven special owls flew out of Diagon Alley along with then others.

The first owl only had to travel about a mile and was really a waste of a trip for the owl, except that it was the easiest way for Harry to get his message to the recipient. It was still early enough that the Chief Editor of the Daily Prophet was still in his office going over the stories to appear in the next morning's newspaper.

Earl Whiteside pulled the letter from the owl after checking it for magic and finding it clean. He opened it and started to read. After the first few paragraphs he almost had a heart attack. He would comply with the letter's wishes as this was first rate material and would guarantee a sell-out. In fact, he decided to order double the normal run, expecting to sell many more from the stands in the WIZARDING areas. Now his only problem was to generate some commentary. He called a few people in and they got to work.

Neville received his letter next. He was surprised to get a letter at dinner time as most mail traveled overnight. He ripped it open and found another letter in it addressed to "Neville's Gran". Looking at the single page with it, he found a letter from Harry. He read through it and considered his friend's requests carefully, and Neville did now feel like Harry was a true friend.

Because of friendship, Neville took the other letter and handed it to his Gran when he went to dinner. She took it and raised an eyebrow at him when she saw who it was addressed to.

Neville shrugged. "He probably didn't know your name and that's how I always referred to you."

She nodded and opened the letter to read it. When she was done, she looked at Neville very thoughtfully. "This is because of that spot of trouble you got into at the Ministry, isn't it?"

"I'm sure that is part of it, but it's not all, Gran. I don't know what he told you, but he sent a letter to me too." He handed his to her.

After reading it, she said, "It's about the same." She handed hers to him and looked out the window to think.

She heard the parchment being set on the table and told him. "Neville, I'm an old woman and many times the old live in the past. I'm afraid I have been doing too much of that." She turned to look at him. "You are not your father, and yet, after what you did at the Ministry with that Potter boy, it has shown me that I am proud of you and have been for some time. I'm sorry I've never told you before, but you are just as good a young man as your father was at that age."

Neville felt a little heated in the face and had to look down. He was afraid he would show too much emotion if he looked at her. "Thank you," he finally said, barely able to get that out.

"Longbottoms rarely run from anything and the final decision will be mine, but what do you think we should do, Neville? Should we take young Mr Potter's advice or not?" She watched him slowly look up at her with shiny eyes, almost breaking her heart for not trusting him sooner.

Considering his answer carefully, Neville said, "I think we should send Mum and Dad to someplace else, say Paris, and see if they can help them in a new way. If nothing else, it prevents them from becoming targets. Otherwise, I think I would like to return to Hogwarts

next year. I also think you should find a way to do what Harry suggests in case things get too bad."

Augusta Longbottom looked at her grandson with pride. "So be it, Neville. Come, let us have dinner for now. I shall invite your Uncle Algie over afterwards for tea to discuss this more."

Shortly after Neville received his letter, a similar letter arrived at Luna's house. The blonde girl casually handed the owl some of the food she was packing for her summer trip. Opening the envelope, she was surprised to find a letter for her and thicker one for her father. The writing was very recognizable to her.

"Daddy, you have a letter from Harry Potter!"

The man stepped in from the next room, where he had been packing their magical tent. "Oh?" He took the letter and the two began to read. When he finished, he read another letter, or rather an essay, that had been included. Seeing Luna looking at him, he handed the essay to her.

When Luna finished, he looked at his only daughter and his fondest treasure. "You know him best, what do you think?"

Luna picked up her father's letter, not wanting there to be any unknown information. When she set it down, she nudged him into a chair and then sat in his lap as she used to do when she was younger. "I know we believe the Snorkacks are in Scandinavia, but I think we should also check out Africa. It is called the Dark Continent and perhaps it's the one who's been hiding the Snorkacks in its shadow. Although I do think you should print one last edition of the Quibbler before we go."

The father held his little girl to him tightly and rubbed her head. "I am tired of putting the paper out on a schedule. Perhaps a year or two off for a safari would be welcome." He kissed the top of her head. "Let's leave the packing for now and go plan our last edition. When it's sent out, I'll mothball the printing equipment, and we can go on our safari. You will need to take your books though. We can't have you getting too behind in school."

"Yes, Daddy!" She gave him a tight hug and got up. They had a lot of work to do.

A few minutes later, a letter arrived at the Weasleys as they were having dinner. The owl flew to the father and delivered a thick envelope. He untied it and sent the owl on its way with a small piece of chicken.

Opening the envelope, he pulled out four letters. He handed one to Ron, one to Ginny, set one down that was addressed to Fred and George, and opened the last one that was addressed to him and Molly.

"What is it, dear?" his wife asked.

"It's a letter from Harry and ... Merlin's ghost!" His eyes went wide as he read the first part. At her alarmed look, he cleared his throat and started to read the letter out loud. Even Ron and Ginny stopped reading theirs and listened.

When he was done, Molly looked very pale. "That poor boy..."

"But what are we to do?" Ginny asked.

Arthur stuffed the letter back into the envelope. "Does yours say anything else that might be useful?" he asked his two children. Both shook their heads. "Then I shall deliver Fred and George's and go talk to Albus. I believe we must verify this before we can decide.

Ron and Ginny nodded; Molly was in too much shock and kept mumbling, "That poor boy."

Arthur kissed his wife on the cheek and said, "I'll be back as soon as I can." Grabbing the two letters, he stepped into the fireplace to Floo to the twins' shop first.

In Crawley, an owl flew to a nicer than average home and pecked on the window. Hermione got up quickly and opened the window to

retrieve the letter. Opening it, she was puzzled to see two slightly smaller envelopes, one address to her and one to her parents.

"What is it, dear?" her mother asked.

Not sure what else to do, she handed the one that was addressed to "Hermione's parents" to her mother as she opened hers.

By the time she finished her letter, to say that Hermione was shocked would be an understatement. Looking up, she saw a look on her mother's face that she had not seen in a few years, but knew it meant only one thing: she was in big trouble. Going by what Harry had written to her, it was not hard to guess what was in her parents' letter. If Harry was here right now, she would slug him in the shoulder hard for doing this to her.

"Dan!" her mother called.

"Yes, Emma dear?" he replied as he walked in from the study with a wine glass in hand.

"Read this while I go get my own glass of wine." She handed the letter to her husband and turned to her daughter. "You, young lady, will spend the next few minutes making a mental list of everything you need to tell us about the Wizarding world with regards to what you've been doing for the last five years and what's happening there that will affect us. I expect full disclosure and honesty." She stormed out of the room after her small tirade.

Hermione wilted into the chair behind her, biting her lower lip as she thought about what to say. Looking up, she saw her father sit on the couch behind him and he did not look happy. She knew she was in for a long evening and wondered if she would be returning to Hogwarts or not next year.

An hour after Hermione started her explanation, an owl arrived at Remus Lupin's house in the country about fifty miles south of Hogwarts. He was surprised to see a late evening delivery, but was pleased when he saw who it was from.

However, as he read the letter, his smile turned into a frown. When he finished, he grabbed his cloak and Apparated to the gates of Hogwarts. He used the trek to the castle to compose his thoughts and questions, of which he had many.

Minerva answered the door when he knocked.

"Good, you're here," he said as he briskly walked in before she could say anything. "We need to talk to Albus immediately. There's an emergency." He followed her to the Headmaster's office.

Inside, they found Arthur Weasley there and the red-haired man seemed very distraught.

"Albus, I received a very disturbing letter from Harry..." Lupin started.

"You too?" Weasley interjected.

"May I see it, please." Albus sounded calm, but it was obvious from his expression that it was a forced calm.

"What is this about?" Minerva asked.

"Perhaps you should read my letter," Arthur offered it to her. "I suspect it is similar to Lupin's."

"My word!" McGonagall exclaimed as she finished reading. "Albus is what he said true? Is the prophecy really about him?"

Dumbledore laid Lupin's letter down on his desk and steepled his fingers to think for a moment. "From Harry's perspective, his feelings on the matter are true as are many of his facts. However, I believe his interpretation of the prophecy to be flawed."

"But that would mean..." she trailed off as if unable to contemplate that scenario.

"What have you done in his five years here to prepare him for what you believe, Albus?" Lupin asked angrily.

Dumbledore looked almost in pain as he said, "I have tried to give him a childhood so that he might enjoy life and see a world that he would love enough to fight for ... and it seems that I have failed."

"What can we do?" Weasley asked.

After some thought, Dumbledore said, "I believe we must carry on and hope Harry is correct, all the while trying to convince him to return in case he is wrong."

Pointing at the postscript on Lupin's letter, Dumbledore commented, "It is good to see that we'll retain use of Headquarters."

It was not until the next morning that the final letter arrived at its destination: Bern Switzerland. A secretary handed a carefully checked letter to the head of the security committee of the ICW. The man was in his late eighties and easily remembered the horrors of the second world war, both magical and Muggle, as he was from Germany.

He considered the letter carefully in light of other information that had been forwarded to him from various intelligence sources. The end picture was not pretty, one might even say disturbing. It was possible this could lead to a Magical World War, and for security of the Wizarding World, that could not be allowed.

He decided to fast-track the issue and scheduled a meeting for this afternoon. A call for status would be sent to all British operatives today, especially those monitoring the Ministry of Magic. If he had it his way, they would have a plan in two weeks and starting doing something to curb this Voldemort in a month.

The man also started to consider initiating a vote of no-confidence for the Supreme Mugwump. Albus Dumbledore never should have let this happen, but since he did, it showed he was probably not the right man to be leading the ICW. He would bounce that idea off of a few others and see if they had similar concerns.

An hour later, he was handed a copy of the British Daily Prophet. While not pleased to see most of the information he had read in his

letter in the newspaper for the masses to read, he was pleased to see that some of the most critical pieces of information in the letter were not published. That information would give them an edge.

The same morning the ICW received their letter, Harry rose and walked to the magical shopping area to find a newspaper. There was a stack of newspapers from the Daily Prophet. Purchasing one, he walked to a café there in the magical area and had breakfast while he read.

He was very pleased to see his letter printed in its entirety. It was mostly like the letters he had sent to his friends, except that his friend's letters had personal pleas and a little more information.

At the British Ministry of Magic, Cornelius Fudge read the Daily Prophet's leading article.

Harry Potter's Call to Action

Last night, we received a letter from Harry Potter which he asked us to print. Considering what he says, we have printed it in its entirety. For more on this, please see the expanded editorial section starting on page 4. We apologize ahead of time for the use of "the name", but this was how the letter was written.

Dear British Magical People,

As many of you may have read a week or so ago, I was involved in event that revealed to the Ministry that Voldemort (originally know as Tom Marvalo Riddle) was still alive, as I've been trying to tell everyone for the last year. It was one more event in a string of unusual events that have surrounded me for the last five years, after an even stranger event when I was one year old.

I believe it is time to tell the truth to everyone so that our entire society can fix the problem we have: pride. Of course we're proud, we're British and we had Merlin centuries ago. But we've allowed that to grow evil and now its time to pay the price as a society and fix it.

It all started about the time I was born. A prophecy was made, part of which was overheard and told to Riddle. He believed it for some reason and acted. That action killed my parents and effectively killed him too, leaving me as a survivor. Since then, I have faced him five times and have either equaled or bested him.

Why has this happened? It was the prophecy. He heard the first part:

The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches...
born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month
dies...

But he didn't hear the rest. The rest of the prophecy talks about my being marked, me having the power to Vanquish him, that one of us must die, and that one of us can't live while the other survives.

Yes, he did "mark" me, so I am the "Chosen One" as the newspaper has called me over the last week. However, if you look at the prophecy, I was chosen in the past, not for the future.

I was marked when I survived the Killing Curse. A curse that always works and yet it failed on me. That sound like a special power to Vanquish him. He did die that night, I killed him. I don't know if I survived because of some magic my mother placed on me or because it's a special gift I have, but on the 31st of October in 1981, Riddle died and I survived. The prophecy has been fulfilled.

But he's back you say. Yes, he did manage to cheat Death from totally taking him. For years, he was a whisper ... a ghost. Are ghosts really alive? No, not really, and neither was Riddle. Therefore, I have satisfied Fate.

Yet, over the last five years, Riddle has continued to come after me, ultimately creating a magical body to live in a year ago. A year for the Minister for Magic to deny the truth and squander opportunity to train new Aurors. A year for Riddle to grow more powerful and sink his claws into our society. A year for me to be called a liar and tortured by the Senior Undersecretary with a quill that used my blood to write with until I have scars in the back of my hand. A year for the British society to turn its back on me.

No matter what is said now, I'm tired of it all. I'm tired of being called a liar publically by the Ministry for the last year. I'm tired of being vilified by people, being believed by only my closest and most trustworthy friends. I'm tired of the corruption in the Ministry where Death Eaters can buy their freedom. I'm tired of the Ministry denying trials to prisoners (Sirius Black was innocent and Peter Pettigrew is still alive and an active Death Eater, and I dare the Ministry to give Veritaserum to the recently captured Death Eaters and ask about him). I'm tired of a Minister for Magic who will throw innocent people in Azkaban without a trial just to be seen as doing something (Fudge did this three years ago). I'm tired of taking problems to adults and being ignored. I'm tired of no one but my closest school friends standing up for me and helping me.

Therefore, since I have already fulfilled the prophecy set for me, I call the Magical people of Britain to action. If you like Riddle, a former man who had a Muggle father and uses the Pureblood families to grab power, then continue on as you are and I hope you enjoy kissing his robes. But if you don't want to live under Riddle, then it's time for you to do something.

I'm told there's over 5000 magical people here. I'll pretend more than half of them are underage. If 2000 of you were to rise up against Riddle, he could not survive. Sure it's dangerous, but so is riding a broom and then not paying attention to where you're flying, and many other daily things. Brewing a potion wrong can be deadly, yet many of your brew potions.

What can you really do? Ignore the useless pamphlet the Ministry sent out. Pick up your wand and use it in self-defense. When you see a Death Eater, cast a spell at him. There are many more of you than them and enough spells will overcome any shield. Do you know someone who is a Death Eater? Tell the Ministry, I'm told Director Bones is trustworthy. Let's get the Death Eaters arrested, given a trial, and sent to prison or executed. Without support, Riddle will have a much harder time taking over.

When Riddle shows up, treat him like a strong Death Eater and cast as many spells at him as you can. He can be taken down, I've done it.

I've done my part by Vanquishing him as a baby and then killing him twice more in recent years. I think three times is enough for anyone - I'm done fighting. Now, it's your turn. Get rid of the Death Eaters, find out why Riddle keeps coming back and remove that ability, and get rid of Riddle.

It's acceptable to be proud of yourself and your family for your accomplishments. However, it is wrong to be so proud that you look down upon someone because of supposed blood issues - because of their heritage. We are all equal under magic and having these blood prejudices fractures our society and causes us to fight among ourselves. I've seen it at school ... Riddle and his gang of terrorists trying to bully everyone as if they are better than you is more of the same. Cast them from our society and then let's all live together peacefully.

Good luck!
Harry James Potter

Cornelius Fudge knew he was done for. Potter's popularity was rising and there was no way he could defend against all the questions and charges that would be brought up by this article. Finding a quill and some parchment, he started to pen his resignation letter. Perhaps the Potter lad was correct: it was time to call it quits while you were ahead.

Epilogue:

Harry lounged outside, enjoying the warm day in the low 90's or the mid-30's, depending on which temperature scale one used. Despite the heat, it was a fine day compared to what Scotland was experiencing now in mid-January. The opposite seasons that he was in as he sat west of Port Hedland, Australia was still giving him mental fits, but he enjoyed the weather and pleasant scenery anyway.

His new home was in the low rolling hills and forests of western Australia. The school he planned to attend was hidden in the forests not far away. He could fly there if he wanted to, as long as he Disillusioned himself first.

He heard the back door slam and looked over to verify who it was. Hermione came out in a T-shirt and shorts. He couldn't help but smile as he saw her tanned legs, causing her to blush slightly. He really was going to have to figure out his feelings for her soon ... or maybe acknowledge them.

"Since you've closed your books, does that mean you've finished your homework for the holidays?" she asked. "We have to be ready when the new school year starts on the first of February."

He grinned at her as she took a seat next to him in the shade of a tree. "I finished a few minutes ago. It's nearing five, will your parents be home soon?"

"They should be. Do you want to fix dinner or clean up?"

Harry considered the question. He had to do one or the other, it was the rule.

As he had been readying himself to leave Paris a little over six months ago or two days after his letter was published in the Daily Prophet, Hermione had contacted him via an owl, telling him that she was in Paris with her mother and they wanted to talk. When they got together, he was told the Grangers were leaving England too and wanted to go with him. Hermione's father was staying behind only long enough to sell the practice and their house before he joined them.

When Harry explained about going to Australia and showed her a book about magical schools there, they picked the one in western Australia. Emma Granger insisted that Harry live with them, that there were a few things he could learn from them as he finished growing up. Despite the fact that the demands were the same as Molly Weasley would have made, Harry felt about a lot better about Emma's offer because of the way she presented it. She was clear that Harry needed adults around, but that he could have a lot of freedom too. He agreed and became a "boarder" in their house. He had a few chores to do, but they were easy compared to what it was like with the Dursleys and he found he liked Hermione's parents. They opened a

dental office in Port Hedland while they lived about twenty miles west of town where the houses were far apart.

"I think I'll clean up," he finally said with a grin, knowing it was the easier of the two jobs.

"I knew I shouldn't have asked," she said grumpily, although with a bit of a tease.

He watched her walk back into the house, enjoying what he was watching. Hermione was looking more like her mother as she grew older, and Harry thought her mother was attractive for her age. He wondered if the rules around the house would change if he wanted to date her. He was almost sure she would say yes if he asked.

Deciding to score a few positive points, he got up and went inside to help her get dinner ready. She gave him a pleasant smile when he started setting the table for the four of them.

The very small artificial looking fireplace in his bedroom dinged. Harry went into his room and grabbed the mail that had fallen out of it. While you could use an owl here for mail, most of the mail was delivered via small fireplaces that were only used for mail and conversations. Hedwig was not too happy about that, so Harry still used her to send mail from school to home.

"Was that the bell for the mail?" Hermione asked when he returned to the kitchen.

"Yeah, it's from Neville."

"Oh, good. What does he say?"

Harry read through it quickly. "First, he says hi to you. Ron and Ginny say hi too. Apparently Luna and her father are still in Africa as they haven't returned yet."

"What about the school and the war?"

"Good news there," he replied. "He says that they've figure out what's keeping Riddle alive and they're trying to take care of that. McGonagall came up with the idea of trying to transfigure Riddle into stone instead of killing him directly. That way they could trap his spirit in the rock then throw that through the Veil of Death at the Ministry. They haven't done it yet, but that's the plan."

"That still sounds difficult," she commented as she used a spell to peel the potatoes.

"School's going well. They believe they have all the Death Eaters out of Hogwarts, including Snape. The Ministry also believes they have captured and sent most of the existing Death Eaters through the Veil. There aren't many raids anymore as people have started fighting back."

"See, they did get your message," she told him.

He snorted. "When my letter was put on the front page of both the Daily Prophet and the Quibbler, it was hard to miss. Nevertheless, I'm glad that none of our friends there have gotten hurt. I wish they had taken my advice and left the country, but at least they aren't hurt."

Dan and Emma pulled up in the driveway, the sound of their car through the open windows was impossible to miss. They entered a moment later. "Is everything all right?"

"Yes, Mum," Hermione answered. "Harry just got a letter from England. The war's not over, but they think the end is near and life is getting better there for most people."

"That's good to hear," her father said. "How much longer until dinner?"

"About fifteen or maybe twenty minutes," Hermione replied.

Harry reached into the fridge and pulled out a Fosters and handed it to Dan, then took one for himself. "Dan, can I ask you a few things?"

"Sure." Dan followed Harry out into the back garden to where Harry had been sitting earlier in the afternoon.

"I wonder what that's about?" Hermione looked at the back door suspiciously for a moment before returning to preparing the food. "He almost looked like he was about to do something difficult, like go after some magical creature."

Emma smiled in a knowing motherly way. "I have suspicion that you're correct." She had seen how Harry had been watching Hermione lately. Six months away from all the pressures in Britain had done wonders for Harry, even allowing him to start to do many normal things, including looking at girls.

"What?" Hermione regarded her mother carefully, trying to divine what was going on.

"Don't burn dinner dear," Emma told her, turning her daughter back towards the stove.

When Hermione was not looking at her, Emma looked out the back door to see her husband shaking Harry's hand and a smile on Harry's face. Life was evening out for those two and the war in Britain was winding down. She wondered if they would go back to England one day or not, but that was a decision for another day.

(A/N: This was one of those ideas that seemed good at the start, but then didn't seem to go in a direction that I really liked. I find the ending to be somewhat lame too. OTOH, once written, it seemed a shame to waste the time and not to post it. So here it is.)

itle: The Medallions

Rating: PG

Summary: Lily Potter creates protective medallions for her family, but never was able to test them. Surprisingly, they work and James & Lily awake on Nov 1st/2nd to find out that Dumbledore has done a few things not to their liking, so they return the favor.

Warning: Unbeta'd, so typo's and thinko's probably abound.

The Medallions

James Potter opened his eyes, although there was no difference with them open or closed - everything was totally black either way. He felt a little stiff all over and sore in his chest. Taking a minute to ponder why he was in an unexpected place, his last actions slowly came to him and he realized where he probably was. His empty hands crossed over his chest gave him another confirming clue, as did the soft confines a few inches over him and the lack of elbow room.

Those idiots, he thought. Trying to be charitable, he considered that he might have been out longer than expected, but this was still highly unusual as it broke centuries of tradition.

Feeling inside his right forearm, his left hand found his hidden wand holder with his backup wand. He felt relief with its presence. As he drew it he considered his options for this unexpected situation.

After a moment, he transferred his wand to his right hand and cast a Bubblehead charm on himself, just in case. Then, hoping he was wrong about exactly where he was, he cast a Vanishing charm on the surface over him. Unfortunately, he was right about where he was and dirt fell down heavily on top of him making it hard to breath. Thankfully, his Bubblehead charm held.

"Bloody idiots!" he grunted inside his charmed area. As he was about to start the difficult task of casting Vanishing spells on the dirt with almost no ability to make the wand movements, he realized he had a better option. Thinking carefully about the front porch of their cottage, he willed himself there and Disapparated ... appearing a second later at the feet of his wife who started to chuckle at him.

"You always have to things the hard way, don't you?"

He kept silent at her rhetorical question, especially with the look which he knew that meant he had been stupid.

"You removed the lid of the coffin, didn't you?" She waved her wand over him.

He felt bits of dirt that he had brought with him disappear, grateful for her care despite her expression.

"And why didn't you arrive standing?"

He decided it was in his best interest to ignore most of the questions, so he sat up and looked at himself, pleased that they had at least dressed him well. Lily looked her usual immaculate self. "I was a little surprised to find myself buried," he told her as he rose. "I can't believe they moved that fast. Burials normally take two days, sometimes even three. How long were we out?"

"According to my watch, almost twenty-two hours, which is near the upper limit of my calculations." She pulled a necklace that was invisible to all but her family out of her robes and looked at the burnt disk hanging on it. "I'll have to make the next ones heavier to absorb more energy." She put it back under her robes as she'd want the chain again later.

"I have to say that I'm impressed, dear. I didn't think you could create something that would attract a Killing Curse and drain away most of it's magic so there wasn't enough to completely kills us, leaving us with only the appearance of being dead for a while," he said with a grin.

Lily shrugged. "I thought it would work, but testing it was the problem because what if I'd made a mistake? Now I'm glad I spent the time on it. But enough of this, we need to find Harry." She looked pensive. "Considering we were buried, I hope that ... that he..." She couldn't finish and her expression turned to one of dread.

James wrapped his wife in a hug. "He had the same protection we did, dear. We'll find him and I'm sure he'll be alive." He tried to be positive for her, even if he had his own doubts. "Sirius should have him; he knows he was to be responsible for Harry. We just have to find Sirius. I'd also like to find my real wand too."

She nodded and gave a tiny sniff. "You're right; we must go on."

He led her inside the house. They each surveyed the destruction.

"You put up quite a fight," she said.

"I did try to give you time to get away. Why didn't you? Accio wand!" He caught the piece of wood that zoomed out from under the sofa and put away his backup wand.

"I tried as well, but You-Know-Who put up Anti-Apparation and Anti-Portkey wards, as well as sealed the house - walls and all."

He nodded as he led her to the stairs. Voldemort was usually quite thorough. That they had escaped him three times prior was miraculous. Upstairs, they each surveyed the destruction of Harry's room, which was only in one area.

"You didn't fight so much," he commented quietly, doing his best not to sound like he was rebuking her.

"I only managed two spells before he disarmed me. I always did fight better when at your side." She gave him a loving look. "I always thought I complemented you, not replaced you."

He squeezed her shoulder in understanding as he stood with one arm around her; he always felt better with her at his side as well.

"Accio wand!" Her wand came flying to her from under the crib and she put her backup wand away. "Let's find Sirius," she told him.

"And Pettigrew," he spat. "I swear I'll lock him in his rat form and throw him in a room of cats."

"I'll find the cats for you," she said coldly. "I can't believe we trusted him."

James turned and led her down the stairs. Looking around, he saw the mirror on the side table where he had last used it - just as their front door was blown open. Grabbing it and touching his wand to it, he said, "Sirius Black!"

The mirror swirled a moment later and the face of his best friend appeared, looking shocked. "James? Is that really you? How did you survive? Did Lily make it too?"

"Yes, it's really me you mangy dog." James heard his friend's barking laugh at his most common friendly insult. He sounded insane and relieved at the same time. "I'll explain the how later, but where are you and more importantly where's Harry? Lily and I want to find him."

Sirius sobered instantly. "I'm tracking Pettigrew now," he growled. "I swear I'm going to force him into a meat grinder one limb at a time - slowly." His friendly look returned. "Harry survived, James. Rumor has it that You-Know-Who hit him with a Killing Curse and it rebounded and killed the bastard. It left Harry with a scar, but he otherwise looked fine when I saw him. Hagrid had him and wouldn't give him to me when I arrived - said something about orders from Dumbledore. Since Harry was safe for the moment, I gave Hagrid my bike and went after Pettigrew. I figured I'd get Harry later."

"Sirius Black! I swear I'm going to cut your tail off for abandoning Harry like that!" Lily yelled at the mirror.

James decided it was in his best interest to stay quiet. Sirius was his best mate, but Lily was his wife.

"We can always find Pettigrew later, but Harry's protection comes first," she told Sirius firmly.

Abashed, Sirius's face disappeared from the mirror for a moment. "I'm sorry, Lily. You're right that I failed. I'll come back and we can go find him."

She looked at her husband, who was standing there expressionless, but his body language gave away his thoughts. He looked tightly strung. "Go ahead and join him. I'll go after Harry and I'll meet you back here."

James appeared to sag in relief and he kissed her quickly. "Meeting in the safe room would be better."

"You're right," she agreed. "I'll pack a few things from here and meet you there later with Harry."

James kissed her again quickly, found out where Sirius was, handed her the mirror in case she needed to contact him, and left.

They didn't have much of importance here, but there were a few things. Lily went upstairs to their room. She pulled out their travelling trunk and packed some clothes into it as well as some clothes and toys for Harry. All the rest of their important things were already in the trunk. Finished, she shrunk the trunk and put it in a pocket.

Pulling out her necklace again, she cast a charm on it and said, "Harry." The medallion on it moved towards her son's medallion, in the direction of London. That surprised her because she thought Dumbledore would have taken him to Hogwarts. She visualized the outside of the Leaky Cauldron and Apparated away.

With a small cracking sound, she arrived on the Muggle street outside the famous Wizarding pub. Doing the directional spell again, her medallion moved mostly west. That puzzled her greatly as she was not sure who was in that direction that might be keeping Harry.

Not sure what else to do, Lily cast a Disillusionment charm on herself and Apparated to the west side of London. She kept going west to different places she was aware of and half an hour later found herself in Surrey when her medallion suddenly pointed in a different direction. He wouldn't, she thought as a truly awful idea came to her.

Another Apparation took her to the front porch of a house that looked like all the others around it, one that she had visited only three times before and only for a few minutes each time. At her feet was a basket

with a blue blanket on top. Opening the blanket, she saw their son who now had a lightning bolt shaped cut on his forehead. She also found a letter on top of her son.

Reading the letter, she became incensed. "That bastard," she whispered fiercely. "I swear I'll strangle him with his own beard." At least there was a warming charm on the basket, but in her mind that didn't excuse the old Headmaster for what he had tried to do to Harry. Grabbing her son and blanket and putting them over her left shoulder, she shoved the letter into a pocket and Vanished the basket.

Fixing her destination firmly in her mind, she Apparated to the edge of the Potter property. In the moonlight, the ancestral manor house stood in the distance looking as it always had. She walked forward and felt the thickness of the wards as they washed over her and let her pass. Once inside the wards, she Apparated to the front door some distance ahead.

The front door opened for her with a touch of her wand and she entered. While the house as a whole was too big to be hidden with the Fidelius charm, she had hidden one room within it that only she and James knew about. She headed there now.

Inside the hidden room was a board on the wall displaying the status of the wards and a map of the property. A quick check of the map, just like the Marauder's Map for Hogwarts, showed that she and Harry were the only ones here. She turned on a few more wards, activating all but the most offensive ones.

Feeling safe for the moment, she walked over to a table and laid Harry on it so she could examine him. She found his hidden medallion and it was burnt as well, although not as badly, which she found strange. A diagnostic showed Harry was in a magical sleep from a potion. She could easily counter that, but decided not to for the moment as she didn't want to have to keep track of a recently mobile toddler while she had some very important things to do. An examination and diagnostic of his new scar gave her cause for worry. There was definitely something wrong with it and she would have to investigate more later.

She found a tracking charm on Harry and the first part of the blood ritual that Dumbledore had started. Lily removed the tracking charm and the base of the ritual from Harry.

Her anger burned anew as she thought about Harry being forced to live with her sister - a sister who hated magic and everything to do with it since she had been rejected from the magical world because she wasn't magical. She knew Vernon would have hated her son as well. She would have her revenge on Dumbledore for this. Of course, she was slightly angry at herself for trusting the old man so much, a mistake she wouldn't make again.

Looking at her watch, she found it to be after half past midnight. She wanted to call James on the mirror and see how he was doing, but she restrained herself as there was the possibility she could be calling at a bad time. Instead, she spent a little time doing some more packing from the items at the Manor.

A part of her wished that James hadn't sold the family's two house-elves because they could be very helpful now, but there really was no need for them when she and James had no plans to live here anytime soon. At least they had been sent to good homes.

By two in the morning, she was done and James hadn't returned yet, so she lay down in the safe room on a bed, holding Harry close to her. She would not be letting him go anytime soon.

A pinging sound jerked her back into consciousness. Lily rose and walked over to the display board. At the edge of the map, she saw "James Potter", "Sirius Black", and "Remus Lupin" quickly make their way towards the house. Their rate of progress indicated they were flying. She chuckled to herself. Leave it to her husband to find a way to fly when they didn't really need to. She grabbed Harry and left the room for the entrance hall, where she waited. The slowly brightening sky told her the new day was upon them.

A minute later, her husband and friends entered. When James saw her, he rushed over to them and threw his arms around them. "You found him," he whispered emotionally.

"I did," she returned, hugging him back just as tightly. When they released each other, she asked, "Aren't you missing someone?"

A feral and satisfied grin lit his face. "We found him hiding in London. We let Padfoot approach him as if he was the only one there. The rat started to accuse Padfoot of betraying us when Moony and I both stunned him from behind. We dragged him into an alley and then took him to the Forbidden Forest."

"And?" she demanded.

"Remember the big spiders there?"

"Yes." She hoped he was going where she thought he was.

"I locked him in his human form and dropped him into their nest with only his boxers. I'm not sad to say he didn't last long."

"Good!" she told him, not feeling an ounce of remorse. "We need to continue with plan B, although with a modification it appears." She nodded ever so slightly towards their friends.

"You're right," he agreed quickly. "They each have given me a magical oath that they support us and will not betray us. I only wish we had thought of that before," he said with regret.

"As do I, but it can't be changed now." She pulled her wand out. "Remus, put one hand on Sirius's shoulder." When he did so, she cast a Blindfold charm on each of them. "James will lead you to our room. We trust you, but the fewer who know where it is the better."

James walked over and made Sirius put his hand out and grab James's shoulder. He then merrily led them around the house randomly for a few minutes before he took them through the door Lily had opened to their safe room. When the door was closed, they were allowed to take their blindfolds off.

"Nice place," Remus said while Sirius was still looking around. "Why didn't you hide here?"

"Because this only works as long as people don't think we're here. Even with it hidden, they could eventually find the Manor house and destroy it, which would destroy this room too. It's still structurally part of the house," she explained. Pulling the letter that was with Harry out of her pocket, she handed it to her husband and said, "You need to read this. It will change a few things we do."

She watched him read the letter, his face darkening the more he read.

When he finished, he swore, "That bloody bastard. I wasn't sure I believed in that prophecy, even if it looks like it might be true. But this," he angrily shook the letter, "makes it look like it was part of some plan of his from the very beginning."

"Prophecy?" Remus asked.

"It's the real reason we went into hiding," James told his friends. "Dumbledore told us not to tell anyone, but too bad now. He said a prophecy had been made that fit either Harry or Neville Longbottom, Frank and Alice's boy." The two nodded. "Basically, it set up some events that claimed that whoever met them would either kill You-Know-Who or be killed by him. So we went into hiding to try to prevent at least one of those events from happening to Harry so he wouldn't be the one picked to be Fate's bitch."

"James!"

"Sorry, dear, but the whole thing isn't pleasant." He turned to his friends. "So when we were prematurely buried and Harry kidnapped, because you were supposed to raise Harry..."

"I know," Sirius acknowledged.

"...then Lily found this letter with Harry..." James thrust the letter at them.

As they started to read, Remus asked quickly, "Petunia, as in your sister we met a few years ago?"

"Yes," she acknowledged frostily. As they returned to reading, she pointed at the ward display. "James, I think we need to turn the rest of the wards on."

He considered it for a moment. "It will complicate matters a little for the next few hours, but I think you're right. We'd need to turn them on anyway soon." He walked over to the display and pulled his wand and powered up a few runes. "There, not quite as good as Hogwarts in some ways, but better in others. I'd like to see Dumbledore get through that quickly," he said with an evil grin.

Sirius handed the letter back to Lily. "So, he planned on dumping Harry with your sister that hates magic, hoped she raised him as her own, and let her explain that Harry was a Wizard at the 'right time'?"

"I liked the implied threat about how if she didn't, then her family could be in danger too," Remus added sarcastically. "Why did we trust him so much?"

"I can answer that for you, Moony, as you had a special reason" James told him with a caring tone. "I think the rest of us were young and naïve, not to mention caught up in something that we thought could allow us to change the world for the better."

Remus shook his head. "You're right that I had an extra reason to be grateful to him, but apparently I was too naïve as well." He sat down heavily on a chair. "Knowing this extra information makes me look at what we've done, what he's done ... everything in a new light."

Sirius sat beside him. "And it's not a pretty picture, is it?" They all shook their heads to that. "So, what's the plan?" he asked.

"Our original plan B was to move to a safer location and continue the war, but I think that needs to change now that we're removed a betrayer and seen our," James spat out, "glorious leader in a new light."

"And now that You-Know-Who is gone." Lily looked at her husband. "I think Sirius and Remus need to go run an errand for us, so we can 'stay dead'. You need to go to Gringotts in a disguise to move some

money, while I stay here with Harry. I've already packed for us, but I really want to look at his scar some more."

"Right," her husband agreed. Looking at his friends he said, "How would you like to go prank Dumbledore one last time?"

"Love to," Sirius agreed quickly. Remus looked just as interested.

James explained the plan, led them out of the room blindfolded to the front door, and sent them off.

He grabbed an empty multi-compartment trunk, put on a disguise, and headed to Gringotts, where he planned to remove a significant fraction of his Galleons, plus enough to convert to a million Pounds. That would put a serious dent in the family fortune, but it was for a good cause and wouldn't really be lost - just invested differently.

While the men left to take care of their tasks, Lily worked over a still sleeping Harry. An hour later, she still wasn't sure exactly what had happened, but she was sure "something magical" was in his scar, and it seemed to have a mind of its own because normal spells had little effect on it. Fortunately, it wasn't really integrated into Harry, although it appeared to be trying. Therefore, she cast several spells around it to isolated it from her son.

Once that was done, she managed to transfer the "magic" to a quill. Placing the quill in the corner of the rock-walled room, she cast a fireball at it. At first, it wouldn't burn, but a second fireball caused it to start smoking. A third fireball, while the first two were still active, caused it to burst into flame and a faint screaming could be heard from it. When the fire went out, she Vanished the ashes. Lily was no wiser as to what that magic had been, but she was glad she had caught it before it had integrated itself with Harry.

With the foreign magic gone, the scar on Harry's forehead was easily healed, leaving a very faint pink line. She was sure that in a year or two, no one would ever be able to tell it had been there. Relieved, she sat down with Harry in her lap and cast an "Enervate" on him. He blinked his green eyes at her and then smiled. "Mum-ma," he called to her as he stretched his arms up to her neck. Lily pulled her son

close to her and hugged him tightly, barely able to keep tears from falling she was so happy to hold him safely and see him unhurt.

Her husband walked into the room a few minutes later smiling. He ruffled his son's hair, which grabbed the boy's attention. "Da-da."

Lily offered him to her husband, who grabbed him and tossed him a few inches into the air, causing the boy to giggle. "There was something magical in his scar. I've removed it, although I have no idea what it was. It was hard to destroy too."

"But at least you got it," James said as he made a face at Harry, causing him to giggle again. "I need to sit down. The excitement's wearing off leaving me incredibly tired."

"Sorry, I forgot." She grabbed a small potion bottle. "Drink this. It's a half dose of Pepperup potion. I took one shortly after you left. That should hold you long enough for us to finish up our business here." He drank the potion and then continued to play with Harry in his lap, thankful that he could still do this.

A wolf Patronus bound into the room. "We're here and alone."

James handed Harry to Lily and adjusted the wards down. He then sent off a Patronus and left the room. A few minutes later, he returned with a blindfolded Sirius and Remus. James then turned the wards all the way back up.

"That took you longer than it should have," Lily said, eyeing them carefully, demanding an explanation.

"Well, we ran into a small problem," Remus started.

"But it turned out to be a lot of fun," Sirius said with a mirthful grin. "Let me tell you about it and you can imagine you were there..."

Sirius and Remus Apparated to their flats and picked up the essentials they couldn't leave behind and packed their belongings into trunks, then shrunk them down for easy carrying in a pocket.

From there, they went to the gates of Hogwarts and started walking towards the school.

"If we're lucky, he won't be here," Sirius lightly commented.

"Perhaps with all the turmoil everywhere, we'll get lucky, but don't count on it," Remus replied. "Do keep your mental shields up, or at least what you have."

Sirius sighed. "They're not much, but at least I'll be able to tell if he tries something. Remember when we filled the Slytherin common room with three feet of strawberry Jello? I'm sure he tried to read me then and I avoided it by not looking at him."

"Ah, the good times we had," chuckled Remus. "At least I'm immune to Legilimency."

"Yeah, thanks to your furry little problem," Sirius growled, causing Remus to chuckle more.

Soon they were at the front doors of the school. They weren't surprised to be met by Minerva McGonagall. "Professor," he greeted her in his friendliest manner.

"Merlin help us," she replied with exasperation at seeing the two. "We're trying to wind down the celebrations here and return the students to class, not restart chaos."

When Sirius started to reply, Remus lightly backhanded his friend on the arm to stop him. "Professor, surely you can trust me. I was a Prefect."

"Hardly, although it is good to see you both after ... well, after the tragedy." She turned a stern gaze to Sirius. "Some will want to question you," she told him.

Sirius looked surprised. "Err, why? What do they think I did?"

She gave him her patented frown. "While you didn't say it, you implied you were keeping James and Lily safe." She raised an eyebrow for him to explain.

His shoulders sagged. "Not one of my best ideas." Remus snorted but Sirius ignored him. "I hinted at that to divert attention from the real person keeping them safe: Peter Pettigrew." McGonagall gasped. "But don't worry," Sirius assured her, "I have no doubt there's a special place in hell for betrayers like him and he'll be there one day." Like today, he mentally added.

"It's good to hear that you weren't the cause of their demise. Now, what can I do for you?" She looked at them carefully.

"I'm supposed to take care of Harry, according to James's and Lily's instructions. He told me not long ago that he had left something of his with the Headmaster and I thought I should get it so I could hold it for Harry until he was ready for it. It should be in Dumbledore's office." Sirius was at his most sincere, and he hoped most convincing.

McGonagall looked torn. "The Headmaster is not here as he's been called away to help at the Ministry. The Wizengamot is starting trials for the captured Death Eaters."

"For those who can't buy their way out," Sirius muttered, but clearly heard by the other two. After clearing his throat he asked, "Can you lead us to his office? We really do have other things to do and I think James's cloak will be easy to find."

McGonagall considered the request for a moment. "I suppose it won't hurt to look, although I don't remember seeing a cloak hanging up in there." She turned and led them in.

Remus looked Sirius and saw him wink. He was such a cad at times, the werewolf thought with a grin ... although he did have to admit that Sirius was starting to slowly grow out of his irresponsibility.

The professor gave the password for the gargoyle to move aside and led them up to the office. She looked around for a moment. "I know

his office has always been cluttered, but I would think a cloak would be obvious and I don't see one."

Expecting it to not be in plain sight, Remus pulled his wand out and cast "Accio James Potter's possessions!" A cabinet door opened up and a folded silvery cloth came flying out. Sirius caught that and put it into a pocket quickly, causing McGonagall to look at him suspiciously. However, she didn't have long to look as a drawer in the desk opened and an envelope came flying out too. Remus caught that.

Remus opened the envelope and found a small key and a folded letter.

"What's he doing with a Gringott key to a Potter vault?" Remus asked, scowling at the key and wondering how it fit into the plan.

"It must be James's or it wouldn't have come with the Summoning," Sirius reasoned. "What's the letter?"

Remus opened the letter and gave a light gasp. "It's James's and Lily's Last Will." He scanned it quickly until he came to the third and final page. "It's like you told me, old friend, you are to take care of Harry, if not you then Frank and Alice Longbottom, and finally if no one else is available," he looked at the professor, "Minerva McGonagall."

"What?" she questioned hoarsely, unable to believe what she had heard.

Before Remus could answer, there was a flash of light and Albus Dumbledore was standing behind his desk with his phoenix flying over to his perch. "My wards reported a non-faculty member was here and it seems they were correct." He eyed two young men, but most of his gaze was on Sirius. "I'm sorry to have to do this," he pulled his wand out and pointed it at the young man, "but I'll need you to point your wand down and swear a magical oath that you didn't betray the Potters, or else I must call the Aurors."

Remus had never put his wand away and was glad for it. It was in plain sight in front of him, so he readied himself.

Sirius slowly pulled out his wand and pointed it at the floor. "Ego fides. I, Sirius Orion Black, do swear this Wizard's Oath on my magic, that I didn't betray the Potters and that I know that Peter Pettigrew did; so I swear, Ego fides."

Dumbledore's bushy eyebrows went up at that information in surprise. After a moment, he lowered his wand but didn't put it away. "Very well, thank you for complying. I take it that your implication of you being the Secret Keeper was a ruse?"

"It was, and a poor choice since it is now apparent that Pettigrew was a Death Eater and the leak within the Order," Sirius answered a little angrily, not liking being duped by the person he once thought was a good friend.

"Most unfortunate," Dumbledore softly replied. "We shall have to keep our eyes open for him. Now, what can I help you with?"

"We came to pick up James's cloak so I can give it to Harry later," Sirius admitted. "Since you're here, I can ask for one other thing." This had been Lily's idea. "I'm supposed to take care of raising Harry if something was to happen to James and Lily. Hagrid said he was taking Harry on your orders. Where is the heir of the Potters?"

Dumbledore shifted slightly but didn't answer for a moment. "He's in the safest of places."

When nothing more was said, Sirius took on a more determined look. "It's good to know that he's safe, but exactly where is he so I can go get him."

Slowly, Dumbledore replied, "I believe he's in the safest place possible and needs to stay there."

Remus was quickly losing his patience, and he was considered the calm one. "In addition to the cloak, we found that you also had a Potter Gringotts key and the Potter's Last Will. Why is that?" A twitch of Dumbledore's right eye was the only indication of surprise and Remus almost missed it.

"I was studying it to make sure it was fulfilled."

"Oh really?" Sirius replied slightly sarcastically. "Then why haven't you followed it and informed me that I needed to come get Harry? Why won't you tell me where he is? Or were you planning on sealing it so no one would know who was really supposed to raise Harry? Is that the official Ministry copy perhaps?" he accused the Headmaster, who didn't answer.

Remus glanced at McGonagall and noted that her eyes had narrowed as she worked through the allegations. "And you haven't explained why you have a key to a Potter vault?"

"I'm merely holding it until Harry grows up and starts school, likewise with the cloak. He'll need the gold to buy school supplies and such," Dumbledore easily answered.

"How about why you buried James and Lily so quickly, completely against tradition. You didn't even notify his closest friends so we could attend the funeral," Sirius accused him.

"There was no need to disrupt the celebrations with such grief and you weren't easily found," Dumbledore replied glibly.

"What a bloody lie!" Sirius retorted, causing a gasp from McGonagall. "You-Know-Who is dead so there was no way he could make them into Inferi, and I was always easily called with a single messaging spell, one you taught us."

"If you choose to see it that way, I don't," Dumbledore casually said. "There are still Death Eaters loose and proper care must still be taken."

Remus had had enough and shook the parchment in his hand. "It is very clear in their Last Will that if something should happen to both of them that Harry was to be given to Sirius, Frank and Alice, or Minerva. You are not on the list to take care of Harry, nor are you named as an executor of the Will. Therefore, legally speaking, you have kidnapped Harry James Potter." He glanced at his old head of house and saw

her stern expression back in place, the one that meant students caught out of bounds would be in severe trouble. "Answer his question, where is Harry?" Lily wanted them to make the old man admit what he did and then answer why.

Dumbledore looked at the three of them for a moment before saying, "I'm sorry, but Harry really is in the safest place possible and he needs to stay there. Voldemort isn't really dead and will return one day. Harry needs to be safe until then."

With forced calm, Sirius asked, "You mean some place like with Petunia Dursley?" Even though Dumbledore's eyes widening was his only response, Sirius knew he had surprised the old man. "A woman, along with her husband, who hates magic and everything magical just like Death Eaters hate Muggles?"

The analogy wasn't lost on Dumbledore. "If Harry were there, I'm sure it would be nothing like that. They are family."

"Have you sat down and had a conversation with her recently?" Sirius asked, now genuinely curious himself.

"I have corresponded with her," Dumbledore admitted.

"As I understand, that means you shared one letter with her ten years ago," Remus supplied helpfully. "Have you talked with her face to face in the last, oh, three years?" When the Headmaster said nothing, Remus said, "I'll take that for a no, which means you don't really know how bitter she is towards her sister. Petunia wouldn't even come to Lily's wedding. The birth announcement for Harry was returned unopened by Petunia. Lily told me the last three times she tried to visit her sister to reconcile, Petunia told her to 'get lost' and slammed the door in her face. That is the woman you wanted to raise Harry?"

Dumbledore said nothing for a moment. When he finally opened his mouth, he said, "I believe your business is done and it's time for you to leave."

"I want the location of Harry," Sirius demanded one last time.

Dumbledore slowly shook his head. "It is in everyone's best interest, including Harry's, for him to stay where he is."

Sirius and Remus looked at each other and then slowly moved towards the fireplace, their wands still at their sides.

Standing in front of the connection to the Floo Network, Sirius grabbed some Floo Power, but held onto it for a moment. "If this is how you treat babies of important people, I hope the Board of Governors never finds out, because who knows how you really treat the students at the school when no one is looking. And I also hope the MLE and the Wizengamot never find out how you broke laws about the Potters or you can kiss your bid for Chief Warlock good-bye. Consider this my resignation from your little information gathering organization. I'm glad you never asked me for confidential information about the Ministry, although I suspect you did do that for others who were more highly placed."

"I'm grateful for you helping me attend Hogwarts, Headmaster," Remus said, "but I find that I can no longer trust you. Consider this my resignation as well. Sirius?"

"We'll find Harry and raise him." Sirius threw the powder into the fire and said, "The Leaky Cauldron." Remus followed so closely they went as a single delivery.

As they rolled out of the fireplace and into the pub, Remus shot a Flame Freezing spell at the fireplace, putting out the fire.

"Hey!" the barkeeper yelled at him.

"Sorry," Remus apologized as Sirius grabbed his arm and began dragging him towards Diagon Alley. "Someone was trying to follow us. If you would, let us leave before you relight it."

The portal was already open as a family had just come through. In the Alley, Sirius continued to pull Remus along.

"That was a good redirection for Dumbledore, but where are we going? We're supposed to be returning," Remus reminded him.

"I had an idea a minute ago. Lily would like it and you know it's a bad idea to disappoint Lily," he said jovially.

Remus pulled his arm loose, but kept pace with his friend. "You have a point," he admitted. A minute later, he was surprised to see Sirius leading them into the offices of the Daily Prophet.

Sirius walked in and strode past the receptionist, who shouted "Hey! You can't go in there without an appointment!" He opened the door to the senior editor and propelled Remus inside the small office before closing the door behind them.

The old man with thinning white hair looked at the pair before he fixed Sirius with a stare. "I thought I told your father I never wanted to see any of your family in here again."

With a grin, Sirius chuckled. "I believe I do remember that. He's dead and my mother doesn't care about you, so most of your wish is granted. However, if you want to turn down a lead story that will sell extra copies, we can leave and you'll never see me again too."

"I don't care about your pranks, Black."

"That's nice, Whittenburg. But do you care if Dumbledore is made Chief Warlock? I understand he plans to try for the position soon and I know a few things that might prevent that," Sirius dangled the info.

Terrance Whittenburg, senior editor of the Daily Prophet, studied the young man carefully. "You've got one minute to convince me."

"Oh, I need less than that," Sirius said with a roguish smile. "I have information that Dumbledore has broken traditions and the law, enough so he'll never be Chief Warlock if presented correctly. Also, if you're careful, you might be able to remove him as Headmaster."

"It'll never stick," the editor replied.

"Even if Dumbledore admitted his wrong-doings?"

Whittenburg pursed his lips and let a hungry look out. "All right, you have my attention."

Sirius leaned forward and placed his hands on the desk to look the editor in the eye. "Promise me you'll print the conversion from the memory I give you word for word on the front page and it's all yours. You can spin the commentary anyway you want it, but I want all of the the world to see Dumbledore for how he truly is: a controlling old man."

"A memory you say? How do I know it's true?" Whittenburg was skeptical.

"I'll swear a magical oath. There was another professor there as well. You can ask her, assuming Dumbledore hasn't Obliviated her, of course." Sirius watched the man think for a few seconds before he reached into his drawer and pulled out a small Pensieve.

With a triumphant grin, Sirius put his wand to his head and pulled out a copy of the memory from the time he walked into Dumbledore's office with McGonagall to when he left in the Floo. To uphold his end of the bargain, he swore a magical oath that the memory was true.

Whittenburg dove into the Pensieve and when he came out, he was howling with laughter. He eagerly gave his own magical oath that he would print the story on the front page tomorrow.

As they walked out of the offices of the Daily Prophet, Remus asked Sirius, "How did you know he'd print it?"

Sirius chuckled. "As you can guess from his greeting to me, our families have run into each other before. While we generally don't agree on much of anything, I know for a fact that he hates Dumbledore and would do a number of immoral things to print dirt on him. All I really had to do was get him curious enough to look at the memory; from there, victory for me and revenge for Lily was assured."

Remus chuckled too. "That article will make Lily happy."

"I hope she'll be happy enough to make Prongs happy and give us another Pronglett to spoil in nine months," he said with a grin, causing Remus to laugh.

Sirius retrieved some money at the bank and they returned to the spot James left them. Remus sent a Patronus message in so James would lower the wards and they could come in.

"And that's what happened, honest!" Sirius swore with a happy grin.

"You really did that?" James asked, barely able to get the question out because he was laughing so hard.

"Believe it or not, that's what happened," Remus said with his own large grin.

Lily was quietly laughing as well. She grabbed two small phials and handed one to Sirius and the other to Remus. "Drink up. It'll give you a little extra energy for the next few hours until we're somewhere else." Trusting her completely - at least in this situation - they both drank.

"Time to go then," Lily said, picking up Harry who was quietly playing at her feet.

James grabbed a yardstick from the shelf and slung a small backpack over his shoulder. Blindfolding his friends again, he led them out of the house. Once they could see again, the five of them left the Potter property, grabbed the yardstick, and James activated it. A long moment later, they landed.

"Looks nice, where are we?" Sirius asked.

"Welcome to the Emerald Isle," James told them and led them into the magical area of Dublin. "We need to find someone who can help us find a property to buy. How do you feel about sheep, pigs, and whatever other farm animal we decided to raise?"

"And what about during my time of the month?" Remus asked quietly.

"You can either use a pad in your knickers like Lily does, or we can probably find a stone shed for you," James quipped, earning him a slap on the arm from his wife. Sirius howled with laughter, while Remus gave him a look of long-suffering.

"And the problem we just left behind?" Remus asked.

"We talked before you returned and Lily and I have decided the prophecy was a fake. If it really wasn't, then I suppose Fate will have to find some unusual way to resolve it. Otherwise, it's Dumbledore's problem," James said as if he really didn't care. "For now, we're going to create some new names for ourselves and start a new life. If Dumbledore is no longer Headmaster in ten years, we'll consider sending Harry there. If he's still there, there are other schools Harry can attend."

"Right," Lily agreed, "so let's go find ourselves a farm."

"And maybe a good woman for each of us?" Sirius asked hopefully.

James laughed and Lily just shook her head at their antics. Harry looked around wide-eyed, happy in his mother's arms.

(the end)

(A/N: A twist on the classic "James and Lily live" story line, which implies that Sirius doesn't go to Azkaban. With James and Sirius going after Peter, it makes sense to pull Remus in so it's all the good Marauders against the betrayer. I also can't see James taking Peter's betrayal easily.

I let Lily "fix" Harry's scar because I do believe Dumbledore should have done something when Harry was a baby, but JKR needed a Horcrux there as a plot device. I'm sorry, but it's not logical to me for Harry to be a Horcrux. The explanation in book7 didn't work for me. For that to be true, shouldn't Voldemort have lost part of himself every time he murdered someone as he did with Harry? While I suspect JKR would say it only happened this time because of the interaction with the "old magic" that Lily invoked and Voldemort himself wasn't alive for the "piece of soul" to return to, the explanation

still doesn't work for me. I guess she doesn't live under the "1 soul living in a person" rule that I do (temporary possession doesn't count as that's not "living").

Another problem I have with the books is that the Last Will for the Potters is conveniently ignored. Book7 makes it clear (to me) that Lily knew that Petunia didn't like magic after Dumbledore's rejection letter, therefore she'd never want Harry going to Petunia. That should mean that the Potter Will would specify people other than Petunia, and like all normal people (especially those with a lawyer/barrister helping them), there would be a list of people to take Harry. If Sirius had a Will, then the Potters (also being an "old family") should have had one too. James was raised in a magical family and his parents had died not long before, so between having been a recent heir and also that he knew he was living in a war, I feel sure that he would have had one and it would have mentioned more than only Sirius to raise Harry. If true, then Dumbledore kidnapped Harry and broke the law by ignoring the Last Will.

So, in the end, I have them fleeing to Ireland to become farmers/ranchers and leaving a mess for Dumbledore to escape out of. If this story were to be continued, then Dumbledore's mess would have to be worked out, and the question of if Harry ever goes to Hogwarts. Also, what would the Ministry of Magic do with Dumbledore's words (I had him say Voldemort isn't really dead)? Remember, at this time, Bagnold is the Minister and Crouch is the Director of the MLE.

Would the Longbottoms still get tortured into insanity? It would be easy for the Sirius to go visit Frank and Alice and tell them to "leave town" before the Death Eaters get there; maybe even have them come to Ireland for a while until everything settles down.

Anyway, that was my idea. I hope you enjoyed it. - Kevin)

Chp8